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General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

14th plenary meeting
Monday, 19 September 2005, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Address by Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mutharika: I wish at the outset to congratulate you on your election as President of the sixtieth session of the United Nations General Assembly and also for the excellent manner in which you and your Bureau are steering the work of this session. I would like to assure you of my delegation's full support. I further commend His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, our Secretary-General, for the dynamic and sterling leadership of the United Nations.

The theme of this session is germane to the proposals for reform of the Organization. There is the imperative of taking stock of its strengths and weaknesses so that we can create a better future. Within the context of this theme, the Secretary-General, through his report entitled "In larger freedom", has made important proposals that will make the United Nations more effective and credible. The proposals aim at enabling the United Nations to provide the required leadership in the implementation of the global development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

My country, Malawi, has followed closely the debate on the report. I feel that, from the diverse opinions that have been expressed, a consensus is emerging on the need to implement United Nations reforms and make the Organization respond more effectively to the challenge of change.

Let me, however, express the view that, in addition to the reform of the Security Council, there are other equally important reforms of the United Nations that are critical to the realization of the global development agenda. I will turn to these later. For the moment, it is critical that we remain focused so that all elements of the reform receive our undivided attention.

Mr. President, let me assure you that Malawi appreciates the role played by the international community and the United Nations in the efforts to eradicate poverty and promote development and prosperity for all. The just-ended High-level Plenary Meeting is one such initiative that offers great hopes for the way forward. However, previous experience has taught us that a lot is generally said and promised within the United Nations, but little or nothing is delivered. It is my earnest hope that the outcome of this session will not turn out to be another talk show.

Malawi faces serious problems in instituting an effective system of political and economic governance.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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My country continues to face critical challenges in determining our political agenda, which in turn affect our development efforts. We still face extreme poverty, food shortages, hunger and malnutrition. HIV/AIDS continues to claim more lives. Malaria is still killing millions each year.

Over and above these problems, we face mounting domestic and external debt, an unfair and inequitable global trading system and the prevalence of conflicts and political instability. We therefore feel that for any United Nations reforms to be meaningful, we need assistance in the areas of good governance.

In Malawi, we are promoting good governance by pursuing sound macro-economic policies, reduction in public expenditure, bench-marking the activities and performance of the civil service and fighting corruption at all levels. We have also instituted effective reforms of the private sector, and through dialogue the business community is now responding positively to economic and social reforms. In many of these reforms, I can say that we have made a good beginning.

It is for this reason that my Government welcomed the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union. Our accession to the African Peer Review Mechanism is a manifestation of our desire to adopt policies and practices that emphasize accountability and transparency in public sector management.

Malawi has made efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals. Our report, entitled "Malawi and the Millennium Development Goals: challenges and achievements", has been circulated. However, my country is facing severe constraints in implementing the MDGs because we are allocating a significant amount of limited resources to servicing external debt and for managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, at the cost of the social and economic transformation necessary to fight poverty.

Malawi, therefore, supports the proposal to find comprehensive and durable solutions to the external debt problem. In this regard, we welcome the recent proposal by the G-8 to cancel 100 per cent of outstanding debt owed by 18 countries, including 14 from Africa. I would like to appeal to all creditors to follow this noble example, because debt cancellation has the potential to assist the poor countries in achieving the MDGs and, hence, attaining national economic recovery and economic transformation.

Another challenge for Malawi is that my country finds it hard to be integrated into the global trading system, partly due to the lack of products that meet high quality standards, but also due to an unfair and inequitable global trading system. We therefore join the appeal for the speedy completion of the World Trade Organization Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations in order to assist poor countries, such as Malawi, to benefit from global trade. Furthermore, there is need to provide immediate duty-free and quota-free market access for all exports from the least developed countries, including the elimination of all non-tariff barriers, such as trade distorting subsidies and domestic support, especially in agriculture, by developed countries.

In the African perspective, development efforts have also been heavily undermined by the prevalence of conflicts and political instability in many parts of the continent. Realizing this, we in Africa have taken bold and far-reaching initiatives to promote peace and security on the continent. For instance, my own country, Malawi, has participated in peacekeeping activities in Liberia, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I commend the role played by the United Nations Security Council and the G-8 in supporting the African Union's initiatives in conflict resolution and management. I also wish to draw the attention of this Assembly to the fact that peacekeeping in Africa constitutes the bulk of the Security Council's work. I therefore earnestly believe that the role of the United Nations in Africa can be enhanced by encouraging Africa's representation in the Security Council. In that regard, Africa's call for the expansion of the Security Council should be supported by the international community.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic poses serious social and economic challenges to Africa. However, the General Assembly may be interested to know that Malawi is one of the few success stories in managing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The people of Malawi have welcomed the provision of voluntary counselling and of free anti-retroviral drugs. For instance, since the middle of last year, we have established more than 30 anti-retroviral clinics throughout the country and have treated many people. We expect that by this time next

year, we will have been able to treat more than 80,000 people.

I therefore welcome the call at the High-level Plenary Meeting to provide, as a priority, assistance for HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment in African countries on a grant basis. I also welcome the emphasis placed on the need to encourage pharmaceutical companies to make anti-retroviral drugs affordable and accessible in Africa. My Government appeals for more funding to enable us to adopt a holistic approach that takes into account the medical, economic, political and social impacts of HIV/AIDS on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

I take this opportunity to commend all countries that continue to make contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The Fund has enabled Malawi to introduce free anti-retroviral treatment programme for those infected by HIV/AIDS.

In terms of agriculture and food security, Malawi has not fared well this year. My country is facing severe food shortages owing to the drought that we have had since January this year. As a result of a very poor harvest, we shall require approximately 270,000 metric tons to feed some 4.2 million people who will be in need of food until the next harvest season, sometime in April or May next year. I therefore appeal to the world community to help us to obtain more food sources for our people.

I am grateful for the pledges of relief food assistance made by our cooperating partners such as the World Food Programme, the British Government, the European Union, the Japanese Government, the United States Government, the Belgian Government and the Norwegian Government. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for the special appeal he has made for Southern Africa.

I am pleased to announce that the people of Malawi are also doing something to feed themselves. We have made provision in our budget to buy food for our people. We have also established a Feed-the-Nation Fund, through which people in Malawi from all walks of life are making voluntary donations to purchase food for the poorest of the poor. The response has been overwhelming.

With a view to a medium- to long-term solution, we have adopted concrete policies aimed at reducing our dependence on rain-fed agriculture. We have established a full ministry responsible for water development and irrigation. We look forward to technical assistance from those countries that have expertise in the area of irrigation.

Turning to the subject of United Nations reform, I wish to bring to the attention of the General Assembly an important aspect of reform of the Organization, concerning the determination of eligibility for United Nations membership. As members are aware, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right of all the world's peoples to belong to the United Nations and that no country should be denied membership in the Organization. Malawi believes that the United Nations was founded on the principle of inclusivity in its membership.

That is why we in Malawi call for the admission of the Republic of China (Taiwan) as a Member of the United Nations. That request is made on the premise that, following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, the new States that emerged therefrom expressed their desire to become sovereign and independent Members of the United Nations. They were granted membership. That was a political decision. In the same way, when the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia broke up into the separate States of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia, each State was admitted into the United Nations. That also was a political decision. Czechoslovakia broke up into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and each of those States was admitted into the United Nations. In South-East Asia, Singapore pulled out of the Federation of Malaya and became a Member of the United Nations. Later, East Timor broke away from Indonesia and was also admitted as a Member. Those were political decisions.

The Government of Malawi is therefore puzzled that the Republic of China (Taiwan), which took a similar political decision, is denied membership in the United Nations. How can the United Nations stand for equity and justice when it is denying membership to more than 23 million people who contribute significantly to global trade and development? How can the United Nations justify its denial of membership to Taiwan when, in fact, the countries listed above were admitted? Why is Taiwan being discriminated against in the United Nations?

Unless those questions are honestly answered, observers will conclude that the United Nations is applying a double standard. The Government of Malawi believes that the United Nations should use the same standard to grant membership to the Republic of China. I therefore appeal to the United Nations, through you, Mr. President, to extend membership to the Taiwanese people in the same way as it has done for countries of Eastern Europe and South-East Asia. That would enable the dynamic and resourceful people of Taiwan to play their rightful role in global affairs, industrialization, trade and development. I believe that the admission of the Republic of China (Taiwan) into the United Nations would also bring credibility to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Long live the United Nations!

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Malawi for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Gambia.

Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Jammeh: Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I have no doubt that, with your skills and vast experience, you will guide our deliberations to a successful conclusion. Let me also commend my dear friend His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, for the excellent manner in which he directed the affairs of the fifty-ninth session. In addition, I commend the Secretary-General for his leadership, especially in advancing the United Nations reform and revitalization agenda. My country has full confidence in his integrity and competence, which he has demonstrated over the years, both as a staff member and at the helm of the Organization.

As we celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization, we must pause and take stock of the record of our collective response to the many different global challenges that mankind has had to face. From a membership of only 50 States at its inception, the Organization has grown to 191 Members today. That rapid expansion, together with the sophistication that the United Nations has acquired over the years, calls for an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses with a view to making it more effective. It is no secret that the voice of the General Assembly has grown weaker over the years, that the credibility of our human rights procedures and mechanisms has been reduced, that democracy, accountability and transparency in the Security Council have become blurred and that the Economic and Social Council needs to be more relevant and effective.

On several occasions since 1945, we have witnessed instances of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Civil strife and terrorism are undermining human and State security. Poverty, hunger and diseases still decimate countless communities, while our capacity to respond to humanitarian crises needs to be reassessed and revitalized.

This is the backdrop of the challenges we as an organization face. They do not represent failure; they simply underscore that more needs to be done to make the world a safer and better place for all of mankind.

Therefore, as we celebrate our achievements, let us rededicate ourselves to remaining true to our mission and also fashion a new vision that captures the realities of our world in the twenty-first century. In this connection, my delegation would like to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive reform agenda he has laid out in his report "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). We agree that the world needs to be steered towards a greater focus on those larger freedoms.

The majority of the world's people today are in chains — the chains of poverty and underdevelopment.

For them, development means freedom from want, freedom from fear and hunger and, above all, freedom to live in dignity. Reforming the United Nations so that it is better poised to more effectively address humankind's quest for these larger freedoms, is a real necessity for the greater relevance and impact of our Organization.

Indeed, the following objectives should be our collective focus for the next decade: absolute poverty and its attendant woes such as diseases, hunger and illiteracy must be eliminated from the face of the earth; the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction must be halted and a total ban on nuclear weapons should be imposed on all States; peace must be allowed to reign throughout the world; there must be greater tolerance and mutual respect in dealing with each other's differences; the world's ecosystems and natural resources must be judiciously conserved and utilized; political systems must work to achieve greater cooperation; multilateralism should replace unilateralism in dealing with conflicts, disputes or disagreements between Member States, and reconciliation should replace confrontation and conflict.

If, in the next decade, we succeed in achieving those objectives, we will have provided for ourselves those larger freedoms that we crave today.

While we must focus on those long-term objectives, we must also not lose sight of the imperatives of our time. We must continue working in concert towards the realization of global peace, assigning highest priority to those conflict situations that pose the greatest threat to the peace of the whole world. In this, we must begin with the Middle East. Without a just solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict peace will continue to elude the Middle East with consequences that will affect the whole world. My delegation supports the vision of a two-State solution, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security. We also welcome Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank as a step towards a complete withdrawal from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory.

The unstable situation in Iraq is causing undesirable ripples all over the world. The situation is, by no means, unconnected with the soaring price of oil, which is causing serious problems in the global economy and threatening the economic gains made by many developing countries. The sooner stability is brought to the region, the better it will be for that country and the rest of the world.

We are encouraged by the positive contributions of the United Nations and the African Union towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa.

In Guinea-Bissau, another milestone has been reached with the election of President Nino Vieira. After many years of trials and tribulation, the people of Guinea-Bissau have finally placed the country on a solid path to recovery, peace and development. As Chair of the Friends of Guinea-Bissau at the United Nations, as well as a member of the Ad hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, my delegation calls for an early convening of a donors conference to show solidarity with the people of Guinea-Bissau and a commitment to lasting peace in that country.

Equally in Burundi, the democratic transition has been completed with the recent election of President Pierre Nkurunziza. We extend to him and the people of Burundi, our heartiest congratulations and best wishes for a new era of peace, stability and development.

This year has witnessed major strides towards sustainable peace in the Sudan. My delegation commends the Government of the Sudan and the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement for their commitment to that historic accord meant to bring lasting peace to the country. We are encouraged by the steps they have taken so far to implement the accord, and it is my fervent hope that their collective leadership will continue tirelessly to pursue the Sudan of their dreams. We sympathize with all the Sudanese people on the tragic death of their leader and Vice-President, Mr. John Garang, who did so much to advance the peace process. We are confident that his successor will continue in his footsteps until all the pending issues are peacefully resolved.

An underlying factor in all of these conflicts is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We must commit ourselves to denying non-State actors, terrorists and organized criminal networks the acquisition of these weapons of mass terror. We shall have an opportunity to further refine our response to this scourge during the 2006 review of the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.

Our Organization must be the ultimate defender of the rule of international law, to which all States in the comity of nations must adhere. Any attempt to

weaken or undermine our rules-based international system should be rejected without compromise. An institution like the International Criminal Court, with a mandate to end impunity, deserves all the support it can garner from the international community. The Rome Statute is a beacon of hope to all of humanity, and my delegation appeals to those States that have not yet done so, to consider speedily becoming party to it.

My delegation strongly condemns the application of unilateral coercive measures as a means of settling disputes. These measures have an adverse impact on the lives of innocent people, who lack any means of recourse or redress. We therefore call for the complete and immediate lifting of the sanctions imposed on Cuba.

As we clamour for reform and renewal of our Organization, we should widen our horizons and undertake a sober and dispassionate reassessment of our policy towards the Republic of Taiwan. The concerns of the 23 million hard-working and peace-loving people of that great country continue to be ignored. The Republic of Taiwan is a democratic, sovereign State. Its democratically elected Government defends the interests of the people of Taiwan in the world. The Taiwanese people display the same concern we all do about global problems such as international peace and security, HIV/AIDS, the spread of disease, environmental pollution, and all the other issues that engage us at the United Nations. Yet, they are not here at the table with us, contributing their share in the search for solutions to the problems that confront humankind today. We therefore call on all the peace-loving nations of the world to support the participation of the Republic of Taiwan in all the affairs of the United Nations as a full Member without delay. The twenty-first-century United Nations should include all people the world over without political discrimination. The United Nations should also be committed to that goal: a twenty-first-century, reformed United Nations that includes the people of the Republic of Taiwan. Their plight is more sharply amplified by our present preoccupation with the conflicts raging today that pose a serious threat to international peace and security.

The reform agenda has been with us for decades now. Finally, this year, a number of reports, including one by the Secretary-General himself, seem to have spurred all of us to action.

My delegation fully supports the proposed reform of the Economic and Social Council and endorses the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. In that regard, we hope that the wealth of experience which the United Nations has gathered over the years, especially in dealing with countries emerging from conflict, will be brought to bear in elaborating the structure, functions and mandate of the Commission.

We equally support the proposed reform of the Commission on Human Rights. However, we should remember that human rights are everyone's concern and their enforcement is not the prerogative of a select few. A smaller human rights body would reinforce that notion and entrench the credibility crisis that the current Commission suffers from. While the Commission may have structural deficiencies, it is its working methods that we must focus on in order to eliminate bias, subjectivity and selectivity.

Revitalizing the General Assembly is equally long overdue. It is time for the Assembly to be more assertive within the mandate accorded it by the Charter.

The reform of our Organization would be incomplete without Security Council reform. The current size and composition of the Council makes a mockery of the larger membership of the United Nations and the realities of the world today. No amount of politics or procrastination can silence Africa's legitimate quest for full representation on the Security Council. International peace and security are everyone's business. Without reform and a thorough review of the Council's working methods, the legitimacy of the decisions it takes will be increasingly questionable.

We shall also have to look into the issue of the veto once again. The purpose for which the veto was instituted and the grounds on which it was assigned 60 years ago are no longer valid in today's world. In fact, Africa's position on the veto, which my delegation wholeheartedly supports, is that it should be abolished. In fact, veto power should be given only to the General Assembly, to be exercised by a majority vote. If that is done, the United Nations and the world will be able to boast of a universal democratic system that will usher in a new and more peaceful world order.

The Security Council as presently constituted is not conducive to the maintenance of world peace and security. If it cannot be reformed, it should be abolished and its mandate assigned to the General Assembly with decisions taken by a majority vote. In that event, any action taken by the United Nations in a

given situation would be taken on behalf of all of us. That would put a definitive end to unilateralism in resolving international disputes and issues.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of the Gambia for the statement he has just made.

Al Hadji Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh, President of the Republic of the Gambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Alexandre (*spoke in French*): At the very outset of my remarks, both on my own behalf and on behalf of the Haitian nation, I would like to express our sincerest congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the sixtieth session. Your wealth of experience in matters of security, human rights and development augur well for the success of our discussions.

I would also like to pay tribute to Jean Ping, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Gabon, whose moderation, sense of compromise and restraint won him universal respect and esteem during the previous session.

May I also express my sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General for his tireless efforts in the cause of peace, democracy and development. That triad — peace, democracy and development — is now the new name for progress made by peoples and for stability in the world.

It is in that context that, for more than a year now, the Organization has deployed the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which is helping to improve the security climate in the country. We requested the Mission because of our firm belief in international solidarity. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those countries that have displayed their friendship to Haiti by contributing in one way or another to the deployment of MINUSTAH.

From this rostrum, I would like to express my sincerest sympathy for the afflicted populations of the southern part of the United States of America that have been so tragically affected by the passage of Hurricane Katrina in August, one of the most devastating hurricanes ever to strike our continent. We would like once again to express to the Government and people of the United States our deepest compassion and our profound solidarity in these trying times.

Our Organization is now 60 years old. The celebration of that anniversary will be a splendid extension of the High-level Plenary Meeting of heads of State or Government, which was intended as an initial stocktaking of the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration.

The Government of Haiti supports the spirit of the text adopted on 16 September, which broadly reviews the minimum objectives that the international community intends to achieve by 2015. Likewise, the Republic of Haiti supports all steps taken to increase development assistance through the use of funds of solidarity at the international level.

The Government of Haiti attaches the greatest importance to the proposal of the French Republic to create stable and lasting financing through innovative mechanisms in order to prevent and cure the major pandemics of our time. I am pleased to note that many of the world's leaders have received that proposal with the greatest interest.

We also welcome various other initiatives, including the United Kingdom proposal for an International Financial Facility, which arranges for borrowing on the financial markets to increase assistance to the poorest countries, in particular for the fight against HIV/AIDS. It deserves our consideration.

However, those efforts may not achieve their objectives if a comprehensive solution to the debt problem of the countries of the South is not found. It would be a positive contribution to international security to solve the debt problem by cancelling the

debts of the least developed countries and helping those countries overcome their financial difficulties by assisting their development. The Republic of Haiti unreservedly supports all negotiated, effective, comprehensive and lasting initiatives of the United Nations aimed at solving the distressing debt problem of the peoples of the poor countries.

On the sixtieth anniversary of our Organization, we should heed the many calls for the reform of the United Nations. Certainly, significant progress is being made, in particular the proposal to transform the Commission on Human Rights into a Human Rights Council. Chapter XIII of the Charter should be removed, along with the references to trusteeship contained in Chapter XII.

With respect to the Security Council, the Republic of Haiti supports paragraph 153 of the outcome document, which proposes the early reform of the Security Council in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus to further enhance the Council's effectiveness and the legitimacy degree of implementation of its decisions.

In that regard, I reaffirm the position of Haiti, as expressed by Prime Minister Gérard Latortue, in favour of correcting the historical error of not having a representative of the Latin American and Caribbean region among the permanent members of the Security Council.

The Republic of Haiti is at the crossroads. In a few weeks, general elections will be held throughout the country to select the nation's elected representatives at all levels. The elections are thoroughly inclusive. All sectors and all political parties without exception are participating. Admittedly, the road to completing the process has been difficult, marked by the outbreak of violence and feverish moments. Rediscovering freedom is not easy. During long months, the country has lived in a situation bordering on chaos, in which armed bands have held many of the capital's neighbourhoods hostage and committed the worst atrocities. Fortunately, they have been, for the most part, held in check by the combined efforts of the Haitian National Police and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

Calm is gradually returning. I am convinced that the electoral campaign will take place in a peaceful climate, in spite of the large number of presidential candidates. At present, the horizon is brightening perceptibly, despite the desperate acts of ruthless gangs. Also, a national dialogue has been launched involving all relevant sectors of the country. The preparatory committee established for the purpose will shortly issue its report.

In that context, the Government and the people of Haiti are grateful to the United Nations and friendly countries of all continents for their solidarity with Haiti and for their interest in the successful outcome of the present elections. Nothing can now stop the march towards pluralist and democratic elections, to be held in a climate of security ensured by the Haitian National Police, with the support of MINUSTAH.

Haiti's chronic political instability and serious socio-economic problems have compelled a great number of our fellow citizens to migrate to neighbouring shores considered to be more hospitable. However, tensions are now arising among a certain fringe sector of the local population of the host countries. We request the leaders of those countries to deal with that issue urgently in order to stop radicals from taking advantage of the situation and committing abuses against expatriate Haitians. For our part, we are open to all negotiations aimed at restoring calm and finding solutions in accordance with international treaties and rights related to immigration.

At this decisive moment of the transition, we renew our appeal to the international community to visit us to observe the holding of the elections. We want transparent elections in which the candidates elected will not be challenged. We are grateful to the United Nations for the support that it is providing to Haiti during this critical period.

I reiterate the solemn appeal that I made from this rostrum one year ago to the international community not to leave Haiti isolated, so that, on 7 February 2006, I can hand over power to a new, freely elected President, thereby placing Haiti once and for all in the community and comity of democratic nations; so that the Government which emerges from the elections can get down to the challenging task of economic reconstruction and social progress — with, of course, the resolute support and unflagging solidarity of the international community; so that Haiti can emerge from underdevelopment and extreme poverty, which provide fertile ground for all dictatorships; and so that the country can finally recover its unity and its soul.

In that spirit of solidarity and authentic cooperation — which is, after all, the raison d'être of the United Nations — the Republic of Haiti will work to achieve, between now and 2015, the Millennium Development Goals, to which all countries aspire.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Interim President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Boniface Alexandre, Interim President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Toafa (Tuvalu): The people of Tuvalu, on whose behalf I have the honour to speak, join me in extending our warmest congratulations to the United Nations on the occasion of its sixtieth anniversary.

I wish to put on record our profound gratitude to every single member of this great body for the immense achievements of the United Nations. The Organization's noble values and principles have indeed ensured that even small and isolated nations such as Tuvalu can enjoy the goals of self-determination and statehood with dignity and hope. We are proud to be a member of this great family of Nations.

We also wish to join others in congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency, and to assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Last week the world — our families and our children — heard from us that the time for stating principles and defining problems and actions on the complex challenges of development, security and human rights has long passed. It is now time to take action. But how the rhetoric gets translated into actions to improve standards of living for each nation, and for our families, for women and children in our communities and villages, in an equitable and fair manner, is now the main challenge. The United Nations must play the central role in managing that process.

Tuvalu is greatly encouraged by the prevailing goodwill to fulfil the many international development targets. The commitments made, by the European Union and others, to meet the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance is very welcome. We also welcome new and innovative initiatives on financing and good governance, including the global Democracy Fund, the French initiative and others. The commitment of the United States of America to its Millennium Challenge Account initiative is also very welcome.

As a small island developing State and a least developed country which has consistently taken a prudent and responsible approach to its own national development, Tuvalu is very encouraged, in particular, by the renewed recognition by the international community of the special vulnerabilities of small island developing States, of the needs of least developed countries and of the imperative to address them.

Increased international cooperation to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for small island developing States and the Brussels Programme of Action, particularly with regard to the provision of adequate financing, capacity-building and technology development and transfer, is critical to supporting the poverty reduction and sustainable development efforts of the least developed countries and small island developing States like Tuvalu. There is now a clear need to establish clear vessels of connectivity from international commitments to national strategies, plans and actions on the ground.

In this regard, I am pleased to announce the launch, last Friday here in New York, of Te Kakeega II — Tuvalu's national sustainable development strategies for 2005-2015 — a commitment to action by the

Government and all stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and island communities.

We sincerely appreciate the support of our friends in New York, bilateral partners and United Nations agencies, and we look forward to working closely with the international community in advancing appropriate partnerships as a result of those strategies. In the same vein, the important role played by regional bodies, especially those in the Pacific region, such as the Council of Regional Organizations for the Pacific, in supporting national efforts ought to be given recognition and support. We therefore strongly support the remarks by Samoa and Papua New Guinea on the importance of regional arrangements, such as the Pacific Plan.

Security challenges continue to create worldwide havoc, fear and uncertainty. Terrorist acts the world over, including the recent bombings in London and elsewhere have proven the continued existence of forces bent on undermining the United Nations founding goals of freedom, peace and security. They have also underscored the urgency with which we, the United Nations, must collectively combat these forces.

Tuvalu is fully committed to joining the fight against international terrorism, as required by Security Council resolutions. But we would need to seek the assistance of the United Nations and the international community to help us fulfil the requirements, particularly on reporting, of these resolutions and of the international anti-terrorism conventions.

The threat of the impact of climate change, sea level rise and variability on the entire global environment continues to be a matter of serious security concern to all. For small island and low-lying coastal countries like Tuvalu the situation is devastating, threatening lives, human rights and our long-term survival. The impacts are real and already happening. They demand urgent actions by the international community. As correctly underscored by the Secretary-General in his report, "In larger freedom", "Without action, [small island developing States] will pay a bitter price for the actions of others" (A/59/2005, para. 60). There cannot be a more true assertion.

While we are all deeply touched by the human loss and destruction suffered from Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast of the United States of America three weeks ago, the world will be better advised to take such timely warnings seriously. Tuvalu strongly believes we must urgently address adaptation and mitigation actions against climate change in line with the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol targets to reduce greenhouse gases and advance the development and use of renewable sources of energy.

On the latter subject, it would be remiss of Tuvalu not to again sincerely acknowledge the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol early this year and to urge all industrialized countries who have not done so to ratify it as soon as possible. Not to do so will be to sign on Tuvalu's death warrant.

The time is also ripe to initiate dialogue on a more comprehensive approach for future actions against climate change where all major emitters of greenhouse gases will need to participate. The eleventh session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held at Montreal in November, must advance decisions on critical issues on future actions against climate change.

Unless actions are taken seriously, all efforts for development, security and human rights for those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change will be severely compromised. We appeal to those with the capacity to do so to have a heart for islands like Tuvalu, as well as for the rest of mankind.

On enhancing the relevancy and the role of the United Nations, we would like to reiterate our strong support for the reforms for the United Nations, in particular the expansion of the permanent membership and working methods of the Security Council. In this vein we also reiterate our support for the consideration of Japan, Germany, India and Brazil for permanent seats on an expanded Council. We strongly feel that the momentum so far achieved on the issue must be taken advantage of to finally resolve the proposed reforms by the end of December 2005, at the latest. We also believe more equitable representation of the developing countries for the non-permanent seats of the Council is vital and long overdue.

Tuvalu recognizes the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the social and economic development and security of Tuvalu and other Pacific island countries. Given our exposure and the level of mobility of our communities, particularly our seafarers who serve on merchant ships worldwide, there is an

urgent need for assistance from the international community, such as that provided under the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to help us raise awareness in Tuvalu to combat the threats of the epidemic. We need technical and financial assistance for these efforts.

In terms of natural resources, Tuvalu is really a big ocean, small island country. The Pacific Ocean that surrounds our islands provides the vital source of our livelihoods and economic and social development. Increasingly, however, we are becoming concerned with the real threats of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and of pollution to the oceans from waste, particularly from the trans-shipment of highly radioactive and toxic materials in our region. We would need to seek the understanding of the international community to help us save our oceans and support fully the Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy adopted in 2002.

An important source of financial flows to developing countries, particularly also to small island developing nations such as Tuvalu, is migrant workers' remittances from developed countries. Indeed remittances from our overseas workers, and particularly Tuvaluan seafarers serving abroad, provide a substantive source of income so vital for social and economic development in Tuvalu.

Tuvalu fully supports the affording of urgent attention to the issue of migrant workers' rights, including the maintenance of competency on international standards and migrant workers' safety and security, in the international agenda, in order to ensure sustaining this vital source of capital for small island developing States.

An issue of continuing concerns to Tuvalu is the question of the representation in the United Nations. Regrettably, this august body cannot be said to be universal without the rightful representation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. Tuvalu feels that recognizing the political and democratic developments in Taiwan, the active and responsible participation of Taiwan in world affairs, especially in trade, commerce, health, and international development, without representation in the United Nations is unjust and morally wrong. This state of affairs needs to be corrected. We seek a proper review by the United Nations of this important issue, as well as the escalation of tension in the Taiwan Strait following the enactment by the People's Republic of China of its "anti-secession law".

In conclusion, we want to reiterate that efforts aimed at the sustainable development of small island developing States like Tuvalu, will be of no meaning unless the issue of climate change and sea level is addressed decisively, and with urgency. Tuvalu's interest is not self serving. The more serious consequences of not acting now on climate change, as we are already witnessing the world over, will be felt everywhere.

It is our fervent hope that out of this common house of our United Nations family, there will emerge better understanding and goodwill for the long lasting security and survival of Tuvalu and the whole world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu for his statement.

The Honourable Maatia Toafa, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Labour of Tuvalu, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): My delegation associates itself with the compliments extended to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session and to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping of Gabon.

The United Nations was born 60 years ago when the brutality of war impressed itself on all as far

beyond human comprehension and tolerance. The Organization became a source of hope, founded as it was on the inalienable, interlinked and mutually interdependent pillars of development, human rights and security.

Member States of this Organization have increasingly yearned for its reform in order to make it more democratic and responsive to the needs of all nations, rich and poor, big and small, strong and weak. We should recall that the last reform of the United Nations was in 1963, a good four decades ago. Against this background, my delegation pays tribute to the Secretary-General for his report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). That report formed the basis for discussions by Member States as they prepared for the five-year review of the Millennium Declaration and for this sixtieth session of the General Assembly. It raises critical issues regarding the reform of this world body to enable it to meet the challenges and threats of the twenty-first century — a daunting task indeed.

However, we have noted with regret that some Member States have relegated to the back burner critical issues of development, giving priority instead to security issues, particularly the reform of the Security Council. As a result of this trend, we foresee an emerging, untenable and, indeed, unwarranted situation with the potential to divide regions and/or continents and to adversely affect cordial relations between States.

In order to move in unison, the international community should strive to advance the global development, human rights and security agendas simultaneously. All agree that the HIV and AIDS pandemic has emerged as a major threat to development, reversing, as it does, all the gains that have been made so far. We all also agree that the ravages of extreme poverty continue to haunt us. Needless to say, extreme poverty constitutes a violation of human dignity. Armed conflicts also hamper development. Africa presents a classical example of how those menaces compromise not only peace and security, but also development, thus militating against respect for human rights.

Indeed, it is no coincidence that development has been one of the key objectives of most, if not all, major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Hence, my delegation welcomes the efforts of those donor countries that have achieved the 0.7 per cent target of gross national income as official development assistance (ODA), with 0.2 per cent of gross national income for the least developed countries. We also welcome initiatives by some countries to set up timetables for fulfilling their ODA targets. However, we reiterate our appeal that developed countries abide by their commitments to help developing countries in all the relevant areas. They have to accelerate and increase the flows of ODA and foreign direct investment. They also have to adopt appropriate measures to fully integrate small and vulnerable economies into the multilateral trading system, cancel debt, transfer technology, render financial and technical assistance and provide capacity-building programmes for developing countries.

On this auspicious occasion, my delegation expresses sincere appreciation for all initiatives recently taken to address the needs of developing countries, especially the debt cancellation extended by the G-8 countries to highly indebted poor countries. However, we appeal for debt cancellation for all least developed countries in order to enable them to redirect their meagre resources to national development programmes. It is an irrefutable fact that a substantial percentage of the national budgets of least developed countries that do not fall within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative category is consumed by servicing their debts.

Lesotho supports the launching of a series of "quick wins", as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report, as this would go a long way towards broadening commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting economic growth in many developing countries. In our view, the criteria for the selection of countries for the implementation of the "quick wins" should be fair and transparent.

Terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors, the existence of nuclear weapons, and armed conflict top the list of global security issues. There is, therefore, an urgent need to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism. My delegation hopes that the General Assembly will soon initiate negotiations on an international instrument to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to non-State actors. We regret the fact

that the 2005 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was not able to reach consensus. However, we wish to emphasize the need for all States parties to adhere to the three pillars of the Treaty — namely, disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We also wish to encourage the nuclear-weapon States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to become parties to those important treaties.

The notorious use of small arms and light weapons in armed conflicts is well documented. Lesotho therefore regrets the inability on the part of the Open-ended Working Group on small arms to adopt a legally binding document. We also attach great importance to the issue of prevention of internal armed conflicts by the international community. While we support the moral obligation behind the proposed new concept of the "responsibility to protect", we suggest that the issue should be subjected to further consideration by Member States, guided by the fundamental principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Needless to say, the sanctity of Article 51 of the Charter should be preserved.

The Kingdom of Lesotho considers it the responsibility of the international community, with the United Nations playing the central role, to put in place effective measures aimed at preventing genocide, ethnic cleansing and the atrocities perpetrated on women and children caught up in armed conflict. Consequently, my delegation considers the enhanced role of the major organs of the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, to be of paramount importance. One of the major constraints of the United Nations is that it lacks a mechanism designed to avoid State collapse and the slide into war, or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace. It is within this context that Lesotho supports the proposed establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission.

In the area of human rights, we support the elevation of the Commission on Human Rights to a Human Rights Council, a body that would be apolitical and insist on the protection both of civil and political rights and of economic, social and cultural rights. For my delegation, the flaws of the Commission lay mostly in its focus and not necessarily in its size.

It is in this twenty-first century that peace, security, the right to self-determination, respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms must be guaranteed as the norm rather than the exception. Hence, our call for the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and complete withdrawal from their occupied territories, the independence of the Saharawi people, the lifting of the unilateral economic embargo against the people of Cuba and the end to armed conflicts, particularly in Africa. These matters must be addressed and resolved urgently, comprehensively and honestly, without fear or favour, and without malice to anybody.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister and Minister for Defence and Public Service of the Kingdom of Lesotho, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn.

Mr. Asselborn (*spoke in French*): Just a few days ago, in this same Hall, the follow-up High-level Meeting was held on the Millennium, bringing together an unprecedented number of high political leaders from all over the world. After a process of discussion and negotiation, both lengthy and thorough, we adopted what should serve as our road map for the period to come. The final document should not only inspire but also give specific direction to, the actions of the international community in the United Nations.

While not all our expectations or ambitions were realized in that document and considerable gaps cry out to be filled — I am thinking particularly of the crucial areas of disarmament and non-proliferation — we must, nevertheless, welcome the fact that around the central pillars of the United Nations, namely, development, peace and human rights, broad agreement has crystallized and a new international agenda has in fact emerged.

It is particularly appropriate and propitious that the current regular session of the General Assembly has opened immediately following on the important High-level Meeting. While we may feel that the foundation was laid during that important event, what

we have to do now is to complete what has been undertaken, consolidate the sections of walls that have been erected and build those parts that have only been sketched out — and here I am thinking particularly of the Human Rights Council — and provide our project with a sound roof.

Renewal of multilateralism in the context of the special conditions at the beginning of this century and the reform of the United Nations must be conducted with determination, driven by a real sense of urgency in the light of the significance of the task that awaits us and the crucial matters at stake for billions of men and women.

Knowing as I do, Sir, your personal commitment, your dynamism and your numerous qualities, I am convinced that you will direct the work of the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly in such a way so as to ensure that we can, all together, carry out the urgent mandate entrusted to us by the High-level Meeting and, more particularly, by our peoples, who have placed their hopes on a revamped and strengthened United Nations system. It is in this spirit that my country is prepared to subscribe with conviction to the accountability pact proposed by our Secretary-General, whom I would, once again, like to congratulate for what he has been doing at the head of our Organization.

I would note with satisfaction your intention, Sir, to present a detailed and operational workplan in order to organize our work as effectively as possible so that we can complete the tasks awaiting us according to a fixed timetable. We have to provide concrete evidence that our Assembly will not go back to business as usual once the spotlights have been switched off.

For all those — and I am one of them — who believe that our Assembly, a veritable parliament of the nations of the world, has a paramount role to play in the emergence of a strong political consensus at the world level, the quick adoption of specific operational decisions should deal a sound rebuff to all those Cassandras, all those cynics and all those who uphold the status quo that opposes change.

In his opening statement at the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly, our Secretary-General clearly defined the mission that awaits us in the coming months. Among the subjects that claim our attention, I would focus on the following: human rights, in order to strengthen the impact of this essential dimension in all the activities of the United Nations, particularly through the immediate creation of a Human Rights Council on the basis of the positive groundwork laid in the preparatory work of the High-level Meeting; the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, an innovative body; the reform of the main bodies of our Organization, including the urgent need to enlarge the Security Council in both categories of membership in order to make the Council more representative of the realities at the beginning of the twenty-first century and to make it more transparent and more effective; giving concrete form to the idea of "the responsibility to protect", whose confirmation in the final document is one of the main breakthroughs of the recent High-level Meeting; and finally, the reform of the administrative and financial management of the United Nations in order to consolidate the effectiveness and integrity of the Organization.

Let me also devote a few minutes to the question of development. Development remains the main political and moral issue of our time. It must be noted that progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven and some backward movement must be acknowledged, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The recently published Human Development Report notes that

> "In the midst of an increasingly prosperous global economy, 10.7 million children every year do not live to see their fifth birthday, and more than 1 billion people survive in abject poverty on less than $1 per day. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has inflicted the single greatest reversal in human development. In 2003, the pandemic claimed 3 million lives and left another five million people infected." (Human Development Report 2005, p. 1)

In view of these alarming facts, setting up and creating a genuine partnership for development, based on the groundwork of the Monterrey Conference and on the basis of shared responsibility borne by both the donor countries and the recipient countries, remains a matter of priority. The countries of the South must take their own development in hand by defining detailed national strategies that are effective and directed towards good governance and combating corruption. The countries of the North must fulfil their commitments in matters of trade, debt reduction and enhancing the quality of aid and good practices. Particular emphasis should be laid on increasing

financial flows for development. In this connection, when Luxembourg occupied the presidency of the European Union during the first half of this year, the member States of the European Union took the historic decision to commit themselves on a precise timetable to make a considerable increase of their official development aid (ODA) in order to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national products by 2015 at the latest. Four of the five countries, including my own, that have achieved or gone beyond 0.7 per cent — a target reconfirmed by the High-level Meeting — are member States of the European Union. The Government of Luxembourg has confirmed its intention to increase its ODA contribution in the years to come to one per cent of its gross national income.

Unfortunately, too often the fruits of development are erased by natural or man-made disasters. In the Sudan, in the Great Lakes region and elsewhere, this truth is demonstrated daily. There can be no development without security. There can be no security without development.

That is why I particularly welcome the agreement reached during the summit on the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission. That should make it possible for us to contemplate the tremendous problems of transition confronting the countries emerging from conflict from an overall viewpoint, bringing together the dimensions of crisis management, humanitarian aid, reconstruction of State structures and local and legal structures and providing essential public goods and services, while at the same time re-launching the process of economic and social development.

On the basis of the mandate given by the summit, Luxembourg actively supports the reform of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, which should take shape in coming months so that this renovated Fund can become fully operational by the beginning of 2006. My country has already announced, just a few days ago here in New York, that it would be making a contribution of $4 million to the capital of this Fund, and other States have also confirmed large contributions.

If development is, according to the well-known formula, the new name of peace, we cannot fail, nevertheless, to note that numerous international conflicts and intra-State conflicts and hotbeds of tension continue to dot the face of the world.

Peace and stability in the Middle East continue to be at the forefront of our concerns.

The current President of the Council of the European Union, my friend Jack Straw, recalled two days ago from this rostrum the spirit in which the negotiations on the nuclear issue were conducted with Iran in recent months. Cooperation and respect for international norms and treaties, rather than discrimination or a desire to create dependency, were what motivated us in this case. In the Paris Agreement Iran subscribed to a total suspension of all activities connected with enrichment and all reprocessing activities. It is that commitment that made it possible to develop political and economic cooperation with the European Union. It is that commitment — which, I hardly need to recall, has been ratified by the International Atomic Energy Agency — that I today call upon Iran to respect.

In this context, I should also like to welcome the agreement that was reached just today with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to abandon all nuclear programmes and to rejoin the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is excellent news.

On 22 June 2005, more than 80 countries and organizations met in Brussels at the International Conference on Iraq, sponsored jointly by the European Union and the United States, with the presence of our Secretary-General, and expressed their support for the Iraqi Transitional Government and its political, economic and security priorities. That important Conference made it possible, in particular, for the States members of the European Union to reaffirm their unanimous and united support for a secure, stable, unified, prosperous, democratic Iraq, respectful of human rights, which will benefit fully from the exercise of its sovereignty, cooperate constructively with its neighbours and with the international community, and end violence in that country. And it is our Organization that, more than ever, must be a driving force, play a leading role, in that context.

The Near East has only rarely been the scene of positive developments. This is why I should like particularly and expressly to welcome the political courage of the leaders of the two sides regarding the successful withdrawal from Gaza and certain parts of the north of the West Bank. Now we should take advantage of that positive dynamic to launch a genuine peace prospect based on the road map, which continues

to be the essential framework in this matter. The conditions to promote the emergence of a climate of peace were recalled by the European Council on 16 and 17 June 2005. In particular, the fact that the Palestinian Authority is taking control of Gaza now provides it with an opportunity to demonstrate its institutional and administrative maturity, particularly as regards maintaining law and order and combating terrorism. The cessation of all acts of violence by the parties is also an essential requirement.

Regarding the crucial question of Israeli colonization activities in the occupied territories, the European Council noted that "the policy of colonization is an obstacle to peace and threatens making virtually impossible any solution based on the coexistence of two States". In the same context, the European Council expressed concern at the continuation of the building of the separation barrier in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and its surrounding areas, which contradicts the pertinent provisions of international law. At the same time, of course, the Council recognized the right of Israel to protect its citizens against attacks.

Let us assume that the next meeting of the Quartet, which will be held in New York tomorrow, will find political formulas that will make it possible to continue the positive dynamic of disengagement from Gaza and will clear the way for a just and lasting peace in this divided part of our world.

As very often happens, patches of clouds and glimmers of hope are mingled when we analyse the international situation, but one thing remains constant, and that is the central role of the United Nations in the search for international peace and security. Sixty years after the signing of the San Francisco Charter, we have all met together here to confirm our contract of confidence with this Organization, the United Nations, which is our common heritage — a United Nations renovated and reformed, synchronized with the threats and challenges of our times and able to respond to the expectations of the peoples of the world. As a signatory to the Charter in 1945, Luxembourg, as far as it is concerned, is ready to renew this pledge of confidence with enthusiasm, confidence and determination.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Dermot Ahern, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland.

Mr. Ahern (Ireland): Sixty years ago, our predecessors, having adopted the United Nations Charter, made sure that the United Nations immediately got down to work. We need to act now with the same urgency.

In the face of the profound challenges that confront the world — some of long standing, some new — our heads of State and Government last week agreed on a far-reaching agenda for change. Although the summit did not achieve all that we had hoped for, it is still a major step forward.

It is now time for follow-up. On Saturday the Secretary-General proposed an accountability pact. He undertook to deliver on his obligations but said that we, the Member States, must deliver on ours. That requires real political leadership all round. I here commit Ireland to playing its part.

The United Nations has no Member more loyal than Ireland. But we realize that the United Nations needs to change, just as the world around it has changed. This has to be our focus over the next year. And what we do affects not just us here in this Hall, but billions of our fellow human beings.

For the first time in its history, the human race has the capacity to end extreme poverty. The summit has endorsed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the benchmark of progress towards that objective. Ireland will play its full part. Last week, my Prime Minister committed Ireland to reaching the 0.7 target by 2012. By that year we will be spending up to 1.5 billion euros annually. Moreover, our aid will remain completely untied and directed towards the very poorest. Africa is, and will continue to be, the primary focus of Ireland's aid programme.

Over the past year, we have been tragically reminded of human vulnerability in the face of natural disasters. Their causes may be beyond our control, but how we react is in our own hands. Ireland will place an even stronger emphasis on emergency and humanitarian relief. In particular, we are urgently examining how we ourselves can improve our own capacity to deliver effective civilian protection in such cases.

Conflict resolution is a vital part of the United Nations mission. It is not enough to end war. We must win the peace. Without coherent peacebuilding strategies, vulnerable countries may not escape the cycle of

violence. From the start, my country has been a leading proponent of the Peacebuilding Commission. Now that it has been agreed, let us work hard to get it up and running by the beginning of 2006.

At the summit, there was agreement on the vital principle that the international community should take action to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity when the responsible Governments fail to do so. I hope and pray that such eventualities will never again come to pass. But if they do, we must act in a way which honours that solemn commitment. We have failed grievously in the past and must never do so again.

The summit has committed us to strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery. I strongly welcome the decision to double the budget of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. And the decision to establish a Human Rights Council was very positive. Now the General Assembly must move swiftly to flesh out the modalities and the structure. It must be composed and operate in a way which avoids the failings of the past. But the best features of the Commission on Human Rights, such as its engagement with civil society, must be retained. Ireland particularly values the work of human rights defenders in calling Governments to account, and that must continue.

Once more, we meet in the shadow of terrorism. So many recent and terrible acts remind us that no country is immune, as Ireland knows from its own long and bitter experiences. We should agree on the comprehensive convention on combating terrorism without delay during this session of the General Assembly. And all existing specific conventions must be fully implemented, and practical cooperation made more effective.

The threat of terrorism requires a robust security response. But that response must be intelligent, calibrated and proportionate. It must respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. And although no cause can ever justify terrorism, the political and social conditions within which it breeds must also be addressed.

We cannot ignore the threat posed to our security by weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Ireland was deeply disappointed at the failure of the recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We were equally disappointed at the inability of the summit to make any progress on that absolutely vital issue. But we cannot afford to give up hope. The logic in favour of the twin and mutually reinforcing goals of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation remains compelling.

I welcome what appear to be positive developments with regard to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and salute the leadership of its neighbours and the United States in the negotiating process.

Under the NPT, countries have every right to choose the option of civilian nuclear power. But it is essential that they do so in full accordance with the NPT and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). International confidence in their exclusively peaceful intent is also vital and, where damaged, must be rebuilt in a clear and fully verifiable way. With our other European Union partners, Ireland fully supports the efforts of the European Union three to achieve that outcome with regard to Iran.

We must continue to reform the structures of the United Nations. The need to align the Security Council with today's realities is widely acknowledged. This remains an important piece of unfinished business. We must fulfil our commitment to revitalize the Assembly. And we need to take a serious look at how the Economic and Social Council can better fulfil its role.

The Secretary-General has made clear his commitment to delivering on management reform within the Organization, as was requested by the summit. Very substantial progress on this question must be made during the present session.

I would now like to touch on a number of issues of specific concern to Ireland.

In relation to the Middle East and Iraq, the achievement of a lasting peace in the Middle East is of great importance to the entire world. Here, too, political will is the crucial ingredient. The initial difficult phase of Israel's disengagement from settlements in Gaza has taken place peacefully. The courage and the commitment of Prime Minister Sharon and his Government have been commendable. Much, however, remains to be done.

I welcome the determination of President Abbas and his colleagues to take full advantage of the

opportunity presented by the withdrawal. They must, with our help, maintain their efforts to ensure peace, security and the rule of law. And disengagement will truly be a success only if Gaza becomes economically viable, with free trade and free movement. This is clearly in Israel's interests, as well as in those of the Palestinians.

Disengagement is an important advance. It cannot be the end, but rather a step towards the full implementation of the Quartet's road map. With the support and the assistance of the international community, both sides must press forward and renew momentum towards a permanent peace. It is also vital that, in particular in relation to the West Bank — as my delegation has spelled out in detail on many occasions — Israel desist completely from further steps which could jeopardize the viability of a two-State solution.

With respect to Iraq, the people of Iraq face appalling challenges from terrorism. Despite that, they have courageously taken steps towards the restoration of full democracy and the control of their own destiny. The final decision on the adoption of the draft constitution now rests with the people themselves in next month's referendum. The international community must do whatever it can to ensure that the vote takes place in a democratic and peaceful way. We have seen elsewhere that, no matter how difficult and imperfect progress may be, with political will and the support of the international community, it is possible to move forward, away from conflict.

The elections yesterday in Afghanistan are a further welcome milestone in its transition.

I also commend the excellent progress made in Aceh. I am proud that Irish soldiers are among those taking part in the monitoring mission run by the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Sadly, in Burma-Myanmar, human rights and democracy continue to be denied. That is most acutely symbolized by the continued detention of the heroic Aung San Suu Kyi. The cumulative length of her detention now approaches ten years. Her ordeal is not forgotten by the people of Ireland. I urge ASEAN, in particular, to demonstrate effective regional leadership and to heighten pressure on the regime to release her and move along the path of reform.

As I said earlier, Ireland is particularly committed to Africa. We contribute substantially to development and conflict resolution, and we will continue to increase that contribution. But external help can do only so much. In the resolution of various political crises affecting the continent, the key requirement is, again, political leadership and vision.

We welcome the recent signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the Sudan, which must now be fully implemented. I am encouraged that, despite the tragic and untimely death of Vice-President Garang, both sides have reaffirmed their commitment to the Agreement.

However, the situation in Darfur continues to be deeply worrying. My Government fully supports the African Union's mission to improve security there. We look forward to early progress in the International Criminal Court investigation into human rights violations. The Government of the Sudan and the parties in Darfur must renew their efforts to conclude a comprehensive peace agreement by December, and the international community must continue to support efforts led by the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance.

I welcome recent progress in the Great Lakes region, in particular in Burundi, where the elected representatives have shown generosity of spirit and courage. I look forward to parallel progress in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ireland will contribute to support for the electoral process there.

But I am seriously concerned at the situation in Zimbabwe. The downward spiral, which, above all, hurts the ordinary people of that nation, must be reversed. The Zimbabwean Government should start by accepting the recommendations of the Secretary General's Special Envoy.

Turning to a topic closer to home, in the Northern Ireland peace process it is also time for renewed leadership. There is a real prospect of the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement — which was put together in 1998 and voted by the people of Ireland — and the sustained operation of its institutions. The British and Irish Governments are partners in that endeavour, and we look for others to join us in delivering their promises.

The Irish Republican Army took a major and courageous step forward in July. We now expect early

movement to deliver fully, in a verified and convincing way, on its commitment to decommissioning. There is no room for fudge and, equally, no room for any continuation of paramilitarism or criminality. Sinn Fein should also show leadership in moving to support the Police Service of Northern Ireland and to take their place in the governance of policing. The Police Service is showing professionalism, courage and even-handedness. The completion of the policing project would represent a profound move towards peace and political stability, and I call upon Sinn Fein, in particular, to take the hard decisions needed.

Equally, leadership is needed from within the Unionist community. When the IRA's commitments are fully delivered and verified, then the way will be clear for renewed political discussions by all parties on the reactivation of the Northern Ireland institutions. The Unionist parties say they are prepared to share power, when it is clear that the threat of violence has been removed once and for all. It should soon be time for them to demonstrate that good faith.

I also look to the Unionist community to show determination in condemning and doing all it can to discourage the continuation of the appalling lawlessness, which has in recent times so badly affected both loyalist communities and their vulnerable nationalist neighbours. The need for political leadership is so urgent precisely because the prospect of decisive progress is so real and so alluring.

Following the summit, we have a collective responsibility to grasp the opportunity to reinvigorate the United Nations. If we fail, our peoples today and in the future will not judge us kindly.

Ireland gives its full backing to the Secretary-General's proposals for change. I personally was honoured to act as one of his envoys, because, like him, we recognized that the United Nations was at a fork in the road. At the summit, we chose to start down the right track, but there is a long way to travel. I pledge again that over the year ahead Ireland will remain at the forefront of the drive for reform and renewal.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdelwaheb Abdallah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia.

Mr. Abdallah (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my distinct pleasure to express to you and to your friendly country, the Kingdom of Sweden, my most sincere congratulations on your election to the presidency at this sixtieth session of the General Assembly and to wish you every success in your mission.

I also express to your predecessor Mr. Jean Ping, my deep appreciation for his excellent management of the proceedings of the previous session.

Allow me to take this opportunity to convey my thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, commending his diligent efforts in assisting the Organization to play its role and achieve its noble objectives of maintaining peace and security and furthering development in the world.

Tunisia, which celebrates, along with other members of the international community the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, reiterates its constant commitment to the noble principles of the Charter and reaffirms its determination to continue to contribute, so that the Organization may be as effective as possible.

Our world today is witnessing rapid and successive developments, often marked by an increase of tensions and the widening of the development gap between the North and the South. This requires that we intensify our consultations and coordination on the question of reforming the United Nations and developing its institutions, in accordance with a comprehensive vision based on enhancing solidarity, mutual assistance and partnership among peoples so that our Organization will be able to deal with current international issues efficiently.

Many of those issues still constitute a source of concern for the international community, because of their impact on security and stability, and foremost among them is the Middle East problem.

In keeping with its commitment, and that of its President, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, to peace as a strategic choice, Tunisia has contributed to all efforts and initiatives aimed at reaching a just, comprehensive and durable settlement to the Palestinian question. We reiterate our call to all parties, more particularly to the Quartet, to take advantage of recent positive developments in the region in order to resume peace negotiations, thus allowing the Palestinian people to recover their legitimate national rights and establish their own

independent State on their land as well as bringing security, stability and prosperity to all peoples of the region.

We feel that achieving just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East requires the recovery by sisterly Syria and Lebanon of all their occupied territories.

We also express the hope that sisterly Iraq will complete its political process and strengthen its constitutional institutions in accordance with the aspirations of the Iraqi people, within a context of security, stability and national unity.

Tunisia welcomes the important steps taken by the Sudanese Government towards national reconciliation, in keeping with the aspirations of the Sudanese people to the consolidation of security and stability in that country.

Tunisia is sparing no effort, along with the other sisterly Arab countries, in laying the foundations for a new phase of joint Arab action, promoting cooperation in all the political, economic and cultural fields, and reinforcing the process of development and modernization, in line with the proposals made and decisions taken by the Arab Summit in May 2004, which Tunisia had the honour to host.

We are also keen on consolidating the bonds of fraternity and cooperation with all fellow Arab Maghreb countries and completing the process of building the Arab Maghreb Union, thus meeting the aspirations of the peoples of the Maghreb to development and complementarity.

Although it has witnessed a number of positive developments, the African continent continues to suffer from the persistence of tensions and conflicts in many of its regions. Additional efforts are required in order to take further steps towards their settlement. Bringing to completion the establishment of the basic structures of the African Union would enable African countries to move ahead in promoting cooperation and reinforcing the foundations of security and stability in the continent. This, in turn, will encourage development in African countries and facilitate their integration into the world economy.

At the Euro-Mediterranean level, Tunisia is entering a new phase in its relations with the European Union, a phase marked by a determination to further promote, develop and enlarge the scope of partnership with that Union on the basis of cooperation, solidarity, complementarity and mutual respect, in line with the purposes and principles adopted at the Barcelona Conference as we prepare to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its Declaration.

Tunisia is also endeavouring to strengthen ties of friendship and enlarge the scope of cooperation with the countries of the American and Asian continents in order to establish a solidarity-based partnership that will lay the foundations for a new stage in these relations. That would serve the interests of all parties, bring their peoples closer to one another and contribute to consolidating the foundations of stability, peace and prosperity in the world.

The intensification of violence and terrorism, despite the joint efforts undertaken for many years to confront that grave scourge, deepens our conviction that the most effective way to deal with terrorism is by unifying our methods for tackling it, thereby strengthening the capacity of the international community to confront terrorism and eradicate its root causes.

In that regard, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali proposed the convening of an international conference under United Nations auspices aimed at establishing a binding international code of conduct on combating terrorism.

Proceeding from its steadfast adherence to the principles of solidarity and dialogue among peoples and its continuing endeavours to strengthen stability and development in the world, Tunisia will take an active role in achieving the objectives spelled out in the Millennium Declaration and in finding appropriate solutions to the international issues we face today.

In that regard, we would mention the General Assembly's adoption of the Tunisian proposal for the establishment of a World Solidarity Fund. The international community must now provide the necessary financial resources so that the Fund can launch its activities and achieve its noble objectives of reducing poverty and famine, particularly in some regions of Africa.

Tunisia calls for the strengthening of world solidarity, the benefits of which were most recently manifested in the international efforts to alleviate the enormous damage caused by both the tsunami disaster and hurricane Katrina.

As we prepare to host the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society — held in response to a Tunisian proposal dating back to 1998 — Tunisia is looking forward to the high-level international participation of Governments, the private sector and civil society in that important global event in order to give it the best possible chance of success. A successful outcome will help to establish a solidarity-based digital culture that allows developing countries to benefit from the vast prospects offered by information and communication technologies and to make the best use of them in their development plans.

Furthermore, Tunisia wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to all Member States and to the international and regional organizations that have contributed to the success of its international initiative to proclaim 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in the service of peace, security and development in the world.

Tunisia will continue to make an effective contribution to strengthening the culture of dialogue and the values of tolerance and cultural communication among civilizations and among all the world's countries and peoples, and to work against fanaticism and isolationism. We once again underline the importance of those values in spreading security, peace and stability throughout the world, thus freeing humanity to direct its efforts towards comprehensive and sustainable development in a spirit of optimism and confidence in a better future.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Petros Molyviatis, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece.

Mr. Molyviatis (Greece): Let me begin, Mr. President, by congratulating you upon your election as President of the General Assembly and assure you of my country's unwavering support for your endeavours. Your previous experience at the United Nations ensures that under your guidance the Assembly will continue to promote the values and principles of our Organization.

I also wish to extend our sincere thanks to the outgoing President, Mr. Ping. His tireless efforts in all fields, particularly in the preparations for the High-level Plenary Meeting, have been exemplary.

Greece fully subscribes to the statement delivered earlier by the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom on behalf of the European Union, as well as to the European Union priorities presented to the General Assembly.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to promote peace and security and to safeguard the moral authority and the pre-eminent role of our United Nations.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we continue to face many threats and challenges that undermine the basic values and principles of our societies and test our will and determination to abide by the obligations and restraints inherent in those values and principles. Only through concerted collective action, dialogue and mutual understanding can we confront them and pave the way for a better and brighter future.

Terrorism has emerged as the most important challenge of our times, creating an atmosphere of collective fear, intolerance and a never-ending cycle of violence. Throughout history, violence has never proven to be an answer to our problems. Peace, stability and security can only be achieved through tolerance, acceptance and the realization that our common interests far outweigh our differences. There is no justification whatsoever for terrorism. It is high time for an urgent collective effort to put an immediate end to that modern scourge.

Natural disasters, like the tsunami in Asia and the recent hurricane in the southern part of the United States — with so many victims and unimaginable destruction — also demonstrate sufficiently the importance of international cooperation and the urgent need for human solidarity.

I am fully aware of the importance of economic development for a considerable part of the world. Security and sustainable development go hand in hand. Our collective commitment and efforts are needed to correct the imbalances and disparities in the world. It is only a matter of time before extreme poverty, hunger and the catastrophic impact of widespread diseases will lead to strife, internal or external. The foremost example of that is in Africa, where the vicious cycle of poverty, conflict and HIV/AIDS produces an explosive combination ripping apart the fabric of their societies and threatening them with unprecedented and dire consequences.

Multilateral cooperation is the only way to a better world. The international multilateral system must be enhanced and strengthened. Greece fully participates in the policies formulated by the European Union and the various international organizations that contribute to the economic development of all areas of the world in order to redress existing imbalances.

We appreciate the value of cultural diversity in a world unfortunately so often divided by discrimination. We believe in dialogue among cultures, among people and among societies. We fully support the peaceful resolution of all our disputes on the basis of international law and the United Nations Charter. We are deeply committed to the United Nations and what it represents and to effective multilateralism and the pre-eminence of international law.

Looking at Greece's immediate neighbourhood, the Balkans, we realize that it has not yet been fully transformed into a region of peace, stability and prosperity.

In Kosovo, the trauma created by the repression of the past and the inter-ethnic violence that plagued the region for so long has yet to be healed. There is a need for a settlement that is in conformity with international legality, as expressed by the United Nations, and with European standards and values — a settlement which will enhance regional stability.

We remain convinced that European integration is the only way to find permanent solutions to existing problems and challenges in the area. At the same time, regional cooperation must be strengthened so as to effectively address the problems of the neighbourhood. Greece, which holds the chairmanship-in-office of the South-East European Cooperation Process, is determined to strengthen the institutional aspects of that process and to develop it into the real voice of the region.

I deeply regret that the Cyprus problem remains unresolved. In the 31 years of military occupation of more than one third of the territory of Cyprus, Greece has strongly supported every attempt and initiative by the United Nations to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.

In the light of the outcome of last year's referendums, which should be fully respected, any new initiative will have to be carefully prepared so as to ensure real chances for success. For our part, we are ready to work towards building the necessary common ground, which will render possible the re-launching of meaningful negotiations.

Our ultimate goal remains an agreed solution between the two parties. We remain steadfastly committed to reaching a just and viable solution for the reunification of the island following negotiations on the basis of the Secretary-General's plan and the relevant Security Council resolutions, and in conformity with European Union principles and acquis. In this endeavour, Greece will spare no effort.

The climate of our bilateral relations with Turkey over recent years has been constantly improving. We have made vigorous efforts to put our relations on a new, solid track. Significant progress has been achieved in several areas of our bilateral cooperation, and Turkey's European Union perspective will further broaden the scope of our relations.

The latest developments in the Middle East allow us to maintain a certain level of reserved optimism. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and parts of the northern West Bank does, indeed, constitute an important milestone. This is a momentous opportunity to revitalize the road map and to move the process a step closer to achieving a fair, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The road map remains the framework for the achievement of a just and lasting peace. Both parties should concentrate on fulfilling their respective obligations and commitments and refrain from any and all unilateral actions which threaten to prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations and undermine efforts at building confidence on the ground.

Our shared goal remains the realization of a two-State solution: Israel and a democratic, viable and territorially contiguous State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

With regard to Iraq, Greece underlines the importance of its territorial integrity and unity in the framework of a federal system. We remain particularly concerned, however, about the ongoing violence, which makes it imperative to follow the timetable of the political process that will lead the country to normalcy, which is of vital importance for peace and stability in the entire region. We fully support Iraq in this difficult mission.

My country has a long, historic relationship with the African continent and its peoples. We have witnessed with great concern the series of conflict situations that have been plaguing Africa for many years. We are following developments in all cases and are trying to make positive contributions, whether in the Sudan, in the Democratic Republic of Congo or other countries of West Africa, in the settlement of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and elsewhere. The emerging pivotal role of the African Union in dealing with African crises has our full support and deep appreciation.

Last Friday, we adopted a historic declaration, which constitutes a new and important step in the direction of enforcing collective security and strengthening the United Nations capacity to deal with the new challenges and threats that our societies are facing today. Our efforts should now focus on the implementation of the commitments made, so that generations to come can live in a better and more secure world.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Freitas do Amaral (Portugal) (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): I am returning to the Assembly Hall after 10 years. In September 1995, I had the honour of being elected President of the General Assembly. I well know, therefore, what a difficult task it is, and I congratulate you, Mr. President, Ambassador Jan Eliasson, on your recent election. I wish you every success in discharging your lofty functions. I would also like to compliment the outgoing President, Mr. Ping, on the exceptional work that he did during the previous session.

I offer my best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. My country greatly values the excellent work that he has done so far, and the Portuguese Government wishes to express its solidarity with him in connection with the difficult times that has been through, as well as its continued support for the enormous tasks and challenges that lie ahead.

We share some of the disappointment felt by the Secretary-General regarding the failure to approve many of the proposed reforms of the Organization that he set out in his excellent report, "In larger freedom". The entire process started 10 years ago, in 1995-96, under my presidency, and I can assure the Assembly that one year later, when I left office, there were already many consensus-based solutions that could have been approved. But insufficient use was made of the 10 years that have since passed.

We are left with the conviction that progress towards sound reform will be viable only if it maintains, as its reference, the objectives set out in the proposals of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan.

What is sound reform of the United Nations? In my opinion, such reform would fulfil, at least, the following five prerequisites.

First, such reforms must respect and reaffirm the fundamental principles and values of the Charter. Secondly, they must create better conditions for the maintenance and re-establishment of peace, guaranteeing security and dealing with the offenders in either case. Thirdly, they must include strong measures in support of development so as to improve the living conditions of the world's poorest countries and reduce the enormous gap that exists between the countries of the North and those of the South.

Fourthly, such reforms must promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law, internationally, as well as within each State. Fifthly, they must establish a basis and the necessary conditions for a better understanding among peoples, for a dialogue among civilizations, for an understanding of cultural and religious diversity, and for a spirit of tolerance, cooperation and friendship among nations, Governments and individuals.

In addition to those five prerequisites, there is still a need to consider reorganizing the Secretariat, which is an important instrument for attaining the objectives of the United Nations. Make no mistake: I have enough personal experience to be able to state that the staff of this Organization is, generally speaking, highly competent, dedicated and professional. But we must all understand that, in a large Organization such as this one, like in any other, there will always be a need for constant modernization.

Last week the United Nations reform was set in motion. We must continue to work hard, year after year, phase by phase, with the energy and the spirit of compromise that is the hallmark of diplomacy and which must therefore not be absent from the "temple of diplomacy" that is the United Nations.

First and foremost, the tasks to be accomplished in the coming months — which have Portugal's unreserved support — will be to do what is necessary to make the Peacebuilding Commission operational; to implement the already approved concept of the "responsibility to protect"; and to establish the new Human Rights Council.

Development is an urgent task that cannot be postponed. The poorest countries call for justice, and they deserve it; the richest countries insist on a code of ethics, and they must therefore fulfil the duties that derive from it.

In that regard, Portugal fully endorses the vision expressed and reaffirmed by the United Nations which accords priority to development — understood to be comprehensive development, as expressed in the Millennium Development Goals — and which is closely linked to security and the rule of law. Democracy and security constitute the sine qua non condition for effective, sustained and equitable development.

In terms of official development assistance, Portugal hopes to reach the agreed target of 0.51 per cent of gross domestic product in 2010, in order to pave the way to achieving the ambitious goal of 0.7 per cent in 2015.

The efforts of Portugal have been mainly — but not exclusively — directed towards the least developed countries, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

We therefore reaffirm the need to pay active and committed attention to the special needs of Africa. In that way, we will fulfil effectively the commitments undertaken to strengthen cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and with regional and subregional organizations.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly reminds us that every country is primarily responsible for its own development, in a framework of good governance, which is a prerequisite in this context.

Basically, it is a matter of implementing the eighth Millennium Goal: to create a global partnership for development, whose importance in promoting a more equitable and just world I would like to stress here.

That is why I have no hesitation in stating that we must remain actively committed to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, including strengthening action in priority areas. Our common future is at stake, and I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Portugal has decided to contribute to the United Nations Democracy Fund.

For Portugal, environmental concerns are a clear priority; addressing them must promote, not detract from, development. In that domain, we will actively participate in international efforts to combat climate change, honouring our commitments and limiting greenhouse-gas emissions, so that the European Union can attain the goals agreed in the context of the Kyoto Protocol. We hope that the next Conference, to be held in Montreal, will mark the launching of a negotiating process on climate-related issues for the post-2012 period.

One of the most serious threats to peace and security today is terrorism. It must be fought with resolve, within the framework of the rule of law and with respect for human rights. There can be no doubt that one of the aims of terrorists is to weaken and distort even the most elementary of the universal values adopted by States and their peoples. Because we are fighting back in self-defence, they say that our actions — theirs and ours — are morally equivalent. Portugal strongly rejects that view.

There can be no ambiguity in fighting terrorism. We must be clear on this and state, quite bluntly, that all acts that aim to kill or seriously injure civilians or non-combatants are acts of terrorism.

We believe that the United Nations provides a framework of reference for combating terrorism, and we therefore urge that a global convention on terrorism be adopted. Similarly, we welcome the counter-terrorism strategy drawn up by the Secretary-General, and we appeal for its effective implementation.

In that context, Portugal will sign the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism during this session of the General Assembly.

We must recognize that the largest cluster of threats to international peace and security today lies in the broader Middle East. Regardless of countries' positions on the Iraq war, it is now essential to do all we can, based on the clear existing mandates of the United Nations, to see that peace, democracy and human rights triumph. That could take a number of years, as in Afghanistan.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is important that, taking advantage of the current positive momentum, we hold serious negotiations aimed at reaching bilateral and multilateral agreements. The road map cannot be forgotten or indefinitely postponed. Just as Israel has an unquestionable right to live in peace within secure borders, the Palestinian State also has an unquestionable right to exist. Only through what is called the two-State policy can there be peace in the Middle East.

As for Iran, I should like to stress and support the efforts of the European Union to avert, through negotiations, another dangerous case of nuclear proliferation. The international community as a whole and the Iranian people themselves owe a great deal to the intelligent approach of the European Union in this matter. We are, and will continue to be, united in solidarity. Negotiations must continue.

Portugal is committed to strengthening cooperation among regions and civilizations in order to promote international peace and stability. Accordingly, the high-level political dialogue between Europe and Africa must be further strengthened, including through the convening of the Europe-Africa summit, towards which Portugal has been working tirelessly.

I reiterate Portugal's appeal to all interested parties to join in our effort to re-launch the Cairo process, which we believe could be instrumental in establishing that strategic partnership.

I also wish to publicly place on record my country's support for Spain's Alliance of Civilizations initiative. The European-African dialogue is also a dialogue among civilizations, as is the Ibero-American process, to which Portugal, Spain, Andorra and the Latin American countries are committed. That process will be formalized at the Salamanca Summit in October.

Over the past nine years, the dialogue among the eight States members of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries — which represents 200 million people living in four continents — has been intensified, with great success. Portugal participates in the dialogue with countries from Europe, Africa, Latin America and Asia, a dialogue that it would like to see broadened as an indispensable tool for civilizations to live in peace and not be at war.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Portugal's faith in the centrality, legitimacy and indispensable role of the United Nations. While not forgetting our setbacks, but learning from them so that they are not repeated, we should bear in mind our many successes. Timor-Leste, which is here with us today as a full Member State, is one example of a United Nations success story.

In conclusion, I would like to remember the wise words of our second Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, who said:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. K. Natwar Singh, Minister for External Affairs of India.

Mr. Singh (India): Your election, Sir, as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session comes at a significant moment in the history of the United Nations. The outcome document adopted by our heads of State or Government shortly after the beginning of the session represents the culmination of a long process. It started with the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. It continued with the Secretary-General's "In larger freedom" report, and the efforts of your distinguished predecessor to synthesize those ideas for the consideration of Member States. We thank all of those involved for their dedicated efforts.

We are united in our commitment to multilateralism; that is a good foundation for our further efforts. All countries, especially those from the developing world, played a significant role in the negotiations on the outcome document. Much was achieved; much has been left out. There are foundations on which we have to build, but there are also shortcomings which we need to correct in the process of implementation. A notable omission is the theme of disarmament. Our struggle for multilaterally negotiated, universal and verifiable nuclear disarmament, in a time-bound manner, must continue with vigour. The outcome document must serve as a road map, with its main elements acting as signposts in our discussions over the coming months under your stewardship, Mr. President.

You, Sir, have suggested a very appropriate theme for the general debate: "For a stronger and more effective United Nations: follow-up to and implementation of the High-Level Meeting in September 2005". We believe that that captures the spirit and essence of all that we, co-partners in the United Nations, wish to achieve.

India is the world's largest democracy. There is no historical precedent for a democracy of over 1 billion people. It is a tremendous undertaking. It is also an exciting and inspiring one. We are breaking new ground. The fact that Indian democracy works is a political miracle. The credit goes to the Indian voters. They ensure that India remains secular, democratic and pluralistic.

We also believe that we need to do much more to inculcate respect for and acceptance of pluralism. I am reminded of what Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, said:

> "I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

Humankind is now learning, to some extent, to cope with the menace of terrorism. We all know that that evil is increasingly directed at innocent civilians. It invites the strongest condemnation. We all agree that there can be no justification for terrorism in any form. Whether we are considering terrorism or non-proliferation, unless there is a non-selective, uniform and sustained approach, the objectives of the international community cannot be achieved. The outcome document reflects the joint resolve of the international community to fight terrorism. In our judgement, there is no institutional setting that is more capable than the United Nations of providing cohesion and vigour to those efforts.

As a victim of terrorism over the past two decades, India understands, and is fully supportive of, the need for United Nations action on counter-terrorism. A key aspect of the implementation of the outcome document will be the development and adoption by the General Assembly of a strong counter-terrorism agenda to supplement the existing General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on that issue. As an initiator of the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism, India welcomes, and is fully committed to, the decision taken by heads of State or Government to conclude negotiations on the convention during this session of the General Assembly.

The main purpose of the summit last week was to review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Unfortunately, most developing countries will not be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, given current growth rates and levels of international support. We must strengthen efforts at both the national and the international levels to take us closer to the development targets set out in the Millennium document.

The Millennium Development Goals embody a quantifiable vision of human dignity and solidarity, as well as of important economic and social rights. Yet, important objectives, such as employment, critical for developing countries, are excluded. India's use of innovative financial instruments for rural infrastructural investment, as well as our Rural Employment Guarantee Bill — recently passed in Parliament — I believe may be of interest to other developing countries.

Most of us had much higher expectations of the summit in the area of development, particularly in agreeing on a definite timetable for the achievement of the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance. Unfortunately, that has not been achieved, and we have gone down to 0.5 per cent. That is equally true of innovative sources of financing because developing countries cannot break out of the cycle of poverty without enhanced resource flows and the application of science and technology to meet their developmental challenges.

As India's own economy develops — at about 8 per cent per year — and its technological advancement comes of age, we are expanding our economic and technical cooperation with the developing countries, reinforcing our political solidarity. We have extensive programmes in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world. We are also happy to have contributed to the South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance. The India-Brazil-South Africa Facility for Alleviation of Poverty and Hunger is a good example of South-South cooperation.

India has written off the debts of all the highly indebted poor countries. Given India's long-term association with and commitment to Africa, we

welcome the recognition given by the High-level Plenary Meeting to the need to urgently address the special needs of our African brothers and sisters. On its part, India has undertaken several initiatives in partnership with Africa. The Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement initiative is designed to promote technology transfer to West Africa. The pivotal role of scientific knowledge and technology for economic development cannot be overstated. India stands ready to share its experience with the developing countries of Africa and elsewhere.

To bridge the digital divide within a country itself, which sometimes becomes as problematic as it is at the international level, wireless local loop technology developed in India, which eliminates expensive equipment and copper lines, has already been used in several countries in Africa. India has put together a connectivity mission in Africa, using fiber optics and dedicated satellite. It will support tele-education, telemedicine, e-commerce and e-governance, infotainment, resource mapping and meteorological services. India is also earmarking $1.5 billion for lines of credit to assist developing countries, in particular those in Africa, in fighting HIV/AIDS and other pandemics.

The international community needs to address intellectual property regimes that seek to deny technologies rather than facilitating their transfer to the developing countries, including in the areas of environment and public health.

Although both the Millennium Declaration and the outcome document have spoken of exploiting the beneficial aspects of globalization, we are yet to agree on and implement the modalities for such a process. Making the process of globalization fairer and more equitable remains one of the main challenges of our time. At present, the accumulation of wealth is accompanied by the accumulation of poverty. Ruskin, the nineteenth century British author, in his book *Unto this Last* — a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi — described such wealth as "the gilded index of a far-reaching ruin, a wrecker's pile of coin gleaned from a beach to which he has beguiled an argosy." Poverty is sometimes attributed to lack of entrepreneurship. The poor of the world prove their entrepreneurship every day by ensuring their families' physical survival.

Regrettably, the summit has not given a clear and comprehensive direction to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Doha Round of trade negotiations. Formulas are not an end in themselves; the end has to be a decrease in poverty and an increase in employment. Therefore, equal treatment cannot be forced on unequal partners. Special and differential treatment remains an integral component of all trade negotiations, including agriculture and non-agricultural market access. India, as a member of the G-20, will continue to promote in the WTO and elsewhere the interests of all developing countries, including the small island developing States, the least developed, the landlocked and the highly indebted poor countries.

An achievement of the developing countries in the Group of 77 is their hard-fought and reasonably successful struggle for progress on systemic issues critical to good international economic governance. We have to build on that to ensure the reform of Bretton Woods institutions and the restoration of the central role of the United Nations in setting the international economic agenda.

A change in the composition of the Security Council is an imperative. The G-4 framework resolution has made United Nations reform a central issue that can no longer be ignored or disregarded. There is a democracy deficit, as the Secretary-General also said in July, in the governance of the United Nations. There is not much point in speaking of inclusiveness, transparency and democracy and leaving the Security Council as a glaring exception to those principles. Measures taken so far to revitalize the General Assembly are simply not enough. Only by electing permanent members committed to rendering unto the General Assembly what is the General Assembly's can that be done. That is essential for a world order in which decisions are optimal and therefore acceptable, and the use of force minimal.

Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, aptly stated: "Above all, we have to participate in the growing structure of a world order. We cannot rely on others to do it on our behalf." One cannot argue in favour of democracy in the rest of the world and leave the Security Council undemocratic. Effectiveness is a function of right decisions with broad support. Negotiations on the outcome document and many subsequent statements have demonstrated that, if more could not be achieved on the development aspects of trade in the document, it is because the Security Council has not been made representative. If institutional reform has been faltering and many are

doubtful of securing a just solution, it is because the Security Council does not reflect the world of today. It reflects the world of 1945.

The unsatisfactory progress on other issues shows that critics of Security Council expansion in both the categories were profoundly mistaken. Security Council reform, far from hindering progress, was actually helping it. In its absence, fears of intervention have prevented agreement on a human rights council and other issues. Therefore, Security Council reform remains more necessary than ever and should preferably, as the Secretary-General has said, be completed by the end of the year. That should be our main priority; I doubt if it is. Security Council reform is not about any country's prestige or power, but about transforming the balance of power in the world. Our experience in India from the freedom movement to present times shows that diversity is a source of strength and effectiveness. The same would be true of a reformed Security Council. We would continue also to engage actively in the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council, the restructuring of the Secretariat and the setting-up of peacebuilding commission.

As we observe the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations, I am reminded once again of the words of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who said at this very forum 45 years ago:

> "During these past fifteen years the United Nations has often been criticized for its structure and for some of its activities. These criticisms have had some justification behind them, but looking at the broad picture I think that we can definitely say that the United Nations has amply justified its existence and repeatedly prevented our recurrent crises from developing into war. It has played a great role, and it is a little difficult now to think of this troubled world without the United Nations." (*A/PV.882*, para. 110)

In the life of individuals as well as of institutions, the completion of 60 years is a significant moment for stocktaking — certainly in my part of the world. Even as we reflect upon the functioning of this institution since its inception in 1945, all of us gathered here look forward to the realization of new hopes, aspirations and, indeed, to a rejuvenated United Nations which is fully geared to meet the myriad challenges of our times and effectively contribute to the well-being and development of humanity at large and to manage change.

The vision which we have for a better world is best described in the words of a great son of India, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, who was the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. I shall end my statement by quoting a very famous text of his:

> "Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
> Where knowledge is free
> Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls
> Where words come out from the depth of truth
> Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
> Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
> Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
> Where the mind is led forward by thee
> into ever-widening thought and action
> Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hassan Wirajuda, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Mr. Wirajuda (Indonesia): We live in an age of unpredictable threats, against which there may be no airtight security measures. Tragedy could strike in the form of a deadly epidemic. It could be the handiwork of terrorists, like the attacks against New York City on 11 September 2001 or the Bali bombings of 2002. It could be a convulsion of nature, like the tsunami that demolished the Indonesian province of Aceh and nearby Indian Ocean Rim areas, or the storm tide that drowned New Orleans and much of Louisiana recently.

On the tragedy of New Orleans, we extend our deepest condolences to the American people.

We Indonesians know too well the enormous suffering that a natural catastrophe can bring. In Aceh alone, the tsunami of 26 December 2004 killed outright some 130,000 individuals. It destroyed 220,000 homes and displaced 572,000 individuals. Some 100,000 persons are still missing and presumed dead. The death toll would have been higher were it not for the quick and vigorous response of the international community and the United Nations. For that, the Indonesian people

are deeply grateful. The outpouring of sympathy and solidarity, as well as humanitarian assistance from all over the world, deeply touched us.

Eleven days after the tragedy, we hosted in Jakarta a special summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami. At that summit, world leaders and the United Nations Secretary-General, as well as representatives of multilateral institutions, worked out a system of coordination and division of labour in attending to the stricken countries. Pledges were made of urgently needed assistance. A decision was reached to develop a multi-nodal early warning system covering the Indian Ocean Rim countries. Within ASEAN, an agreement to establish stand-by arrangements to mitigate natural disasters was concluded last July. Those efforts were reflected in General Assembly resolution 59/233, initiated by ASEAN and sponsored by more than 130 United Nations Members.

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh got off to an early start as the emergency relief phase was completed ahead of schedule. A master plan for reconstruction and rehabilitation was then devised. An agency for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Aceh was established and given broad powers. Through the World Bank's Multi-Donor Trust Fund and bilateral mechanisms with donors, we have instituted a strict system that guarantees transparency and accountability in the disbursement of funds.

Rehabilitation and development, however, cannot run smoothly without peace. And for many years there has been no peace. Before the tsunami, Aceh saw three decades of armed conflict caused by perceived economic injustices. Many Acehnese felt that they were not being given a fair deal by the central Government. As the conflict raged and took a heavy toll on human life, a vicious cycle was at work: violence impoverished the people, and in their poverty many resorted to violence.

In the spirit of reform and in a democratic environment, efforts to address the problem of Aceh through dialogue and reconciliation were initiated in 2000. Those efforts led to the signing of a final agreement in Helsinki last month. That was the silver lining in the cloud of 26 December; it opened the eyes of both sides to the hopelessness of the situation without peace.

It helps that there is international support for the peace process. At our invitation, the European Union and ASEAN contributing countries have provided monitors for the implementation of the peace agreement. In a way, it has created a precedent for the collaboration of two regional organizations in peacebuilding.

The decommissioning and destruction of rebel weapons are working according to the peace agreement. The former rebels are back in the fold of the unitary Republic of Indonesia and are fighting on the same side as the Government in the struggle against poverty.

Peace and development in Aceh are the fruits of reform and democratization, which are pervading all of Indonesia. Starting this year, all local officials, governors, regents and mayors are directly elected by the people. Whereas the former rebel leaders once sought power through the bullet, they can now seek their legitimate aspirations through the ballot.

Since 1998, we have enhanced our political institutions through constitutional amendments. We have overhauled our legal system, and we are adopting high standards of good governance in the corporate and public sector. We have pursued vigorous campaigns against corruption.

We are now pursuing an economic strategy that is pro-growth, pro-poor and pro-job. We are strengthening the export sector, promoting investments to create jobs and speeding up rural economic development. In a few weeks, we will put in place a social safety net that will cushion the impact of high oil prices on the poor. We are on target with our Millennium Development Goals on poverty reduction.

Wherever there is social unrest in Indonesia, we bring justice and foster dialogue and reconciliation, as we did in Aceh.

In the same spirit of reconciliation, Indonesia and neighbouring Timor-Leste have reached out to each other so that both nations might together close a painful chapter in our shared history. Together, we have established a commission of truth and friendship, tasked to bring about exposure of the truth and acknowledgement of responsibility for the human rights violations committed prior to and immediately after the popular consultations held in Timor-Leste in 1999. The commission started its work last August.

The fledgling democracies of the two countries stand a better of chance of succeeding if they work together in a spirit of reconciliation, friendship and cooperation, complementing the prosecutorial justice that has been carried out in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

With our other closest neighbours in South-East Asia, we are striving hard to become an ASEAN community that is at peace with itself and all others — a prosperous ASEAN living in harmony within the community of caring societies that we have long envisioned. We hope to see ASEAN play a pivotal role in the evolution of a new equilibrium in the Asia-Pacific region that will consolidate the peaceful engagement of regional Powers with one another. Today, ASEAN already serves as the driving force towards the development of an East Asian economic community.

We Indonesians love to build bridges. Last April, we served as host to the representatives of 106 Asian and African countries, many of them heads of State or Government, for the Asian-African Summit of 2005. During that historic Summit, we put in place the cornerstone for a bridge of cooperation across the Indian Ocean — the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership — on behalf of the 4.6 billion people of the two continents. Through the Partnership, both continents will intensify their political solidarity, economic cooperation and socio-cultural relations, including technical cooperation and human resources development.

The establishment of the Partnership was the most meaningful way in which we could observe the Golden Jubilee of the 1955 Asian-African Conference held in Bandung, which heralded the emergence of many new sovereign nations from the shadow of colonialism. In those formative years of ours, we sought to reform international relations through the United Nations.

Today, we feel called upon to seek reform of the United Nations itself, for we are faced with the formidable challenges of development, security and human rights — three challenges that are interlinked and interdependent and that cannot be addressed separately. We therefore need a United Nations that is more effective and efficient and more democratic and accountable to its Members — an Organization with a balanced focus on those three challenges.

We need a reformed Security Council that is more democratically representative. As the Asia-Pacific region is home to more than half of the human race and is the cradle of ancient civilizations and religions, we in Indonesia feel that it should have more seats on the Council. Moreover, we must do away with the right of the veto.

We cannot afford to exclude global disarmament and non-proliferation from our agenda. We are not rid of the danger of nuclear annihilation. At the same time, developing countries must be allowed to engage in the peaceful use of nuclear energy to hasten their development.

We need a Peacebuilding Commission to help countries in conflict make the transition from war to durable peace. The Commission must work in coordination with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, under the mandate of the General Assembly.

With regard to the fight against terrorism, we hope that a comprehensive convention can be concluded soon. International cooperation to address this problem should include efforts to deal with its root causes. We also hold that no human right may be sacrificed and that no international law may be violated in the fight against terrorism.

We in Indonesia believe that interfaith dialogue and cooperation to empower moderate voices can significantly reduce violent radicalism. That is why we have sponsored and hosted Asia-Pacific and Asian-European dialogues on interfaith cooperation.

We urge that the Economic and Social Council be empowered to effectively review and coordinate international cooperation for development.

The envisaged Human Rights Council must uphold human rights as universal, indivisible and interdependent. It should be free from politicization and double standards; instead, it should promote dialogue as well as concrete cooperation. It should be a subsidiary body to the General Assembly.

Finally, no effort aimed at United Nations reform can be complete unless it affirms and makes a reality the central role of the General Assembly as the main deliberative body of the United Nations.

It may not be realistic to hope that these reforms will be realized this week or in the months to come. We

the Members of the United Nations are not sufficiently in concert to achieve an early breakthrough. But we who desire reform must keep faith and persevere.

For three decades, armed conflict smouldered in Aceh, until it became clear to both sides that the only way out of a tragic situation was the way of peace. For more than three decades, Indonesian reformists struggled against the crushing weight of an authoritarian regime, until it became clear that our only way out of the Asian crisis was through democratic reform.

We do not know when the moment of truth will come for the United Nations. We hope that it will come, not in the wake of a crisis, but at the dawning of a more enlightened time. Above all, we must never lose hope in the Organization's capacity for reform, its perfectibility. We must keep on working — even harder than before. Then, when the moment of truth comes, we will be ready to seize the opportunity.

The President: I am sure we all agree that there is special reason to think about the country that was hardest hit by the tsunami, with 130,000 drowned and 100,000 missing. I wanted to say that because I believe we all felt a sense of solidarity and compassion in that connection.

I now call on His Excellency Mr. Dimitrij Rupel, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Slovenia.

Mr. Rupel (Slovenia) (*spoke in Slovenian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I would like to express to you the full support of the Republic of Slovenia as you carry out that extremely important and responsible task. May you have much vision, courage and resolve as you preside over the General Assembly during this anniversary year.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil), Vice-President, took the Chair.

At the same time, Sir, I would like to express our sincere recognition and gratitude for the efforts of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, President at the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly. His determined leadership, his insight into the current issues of the modern world and his enduring courage enabled him to guide the General Assembly in its sixtieth year, which promises to be a year of the greatest significance for the future of the Organization.

We have assembled here to consider together in good faith how we should respond to the challenges of modern times and how our Organization should be adapted to the needs of the twenty-first century. We are here to act on the basis of our best understanding and our belief in the achievements of creative development for the well-being of the people of the modern world, to quote, Sir, your illustrious compatriot, Dag Hammarskjöld.

The outcome document contains numerous meaningful and useful ideas. That document's purpose is to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and consolidate its mission in the modern world. The reform of the Organization is of the utmost importance and was initiated at the right moment. This is a time of change for several international organizations and institutions. All are certainly aware of the current transformation of the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Such changes are difficult. We encounter obstacles such as the rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in two referendums.

The effectiveness of the machinery and the mission of the United Nations should also be improved through the creation of the Human Rights Council and the fight against terrorism. There were many discussions and diverging views on those two questions in relation to the outcome document. However, we cannot be successful if we have difficulty even defining terrorism or establishing the Human Rights Council. There is some indecisiveness in the outcome document in that respect. With respect to terrorism, the document speaks of dialogue and understanding among civilizations. With respect to the Human Rights Council, the outcome document proposes holding further negotiations to establish, among other things, its mandate and working methods.

In today's world, change and certainty are closely connected and interdependent. Attaining a balance between them involves values, rules, laws and the institutions of human dignity, equality and democracy — in short, human rights.

The fact is, we live in a globalized and interdependent world in which we all are responsible for our security. It is significant that the outcome document warns that there can be no development without security and no security without development, and that both development and security depend to a

great degree on respect for human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

Many efforts have been made to address the sources of suffering in the world. United Nations Member States must continue to support efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Twenty-five European Union (EU) member States committed themselves to the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) to official development assistance by 2015. In that context, Slovenia, one of the 10 new EU members and a new donor, committed itself to attaining the target of 0.33 per cent of GDP for development aid. We underline the need for the long-term commitment and responsibility of all countries in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

We are continuously surprised at the changing nature of the threats facing each and every country. The concept of security includes both State security and the security of the individual. Thus, it is important to effectively address various issues, in particular disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as the problem of the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons, which affects numerous countries. We are rather disappointed that the outcome document does not include provisions on non-proliferation and disarmament, and we hope that work on those issues will continue after the summit.

Terrorist attacks on innocent people fundamentally contradict the value systems of modern countries, in particular human rights, as formulated and stated in international conventions and declarations. Terrorist attacks are a violation of human rights, which are the foundation of modern societies; they represent an assault on the very essence of those societies and thus negate their very modernity. This negation is connected with the complex and paradoxical nature of the concept of modernity. It seems that the fundamental frustration caused by this complex and paradoxical nature drives terrorists to commit radical actions. Terrorism cannot tolerate the complex and paradoxical character of modern societies.

Measures in the fight against terrorism are aimed at those whose actions deny and reject human rights as a fundamental value of modern societies. By examining terrorists' attitudes and the meaning of terrorism, we should be able to define terrorism. An agreed definition of terrorism would provide clarity and help better ensure human rights. The more fully human rights are protected, the more successful we will be in our fight against terrorism. Human rights will be more fully protected when terrorism is without protection. Tolerating or justifying terrorism undermines human rights.

That does not mean, however, that we can fail to respect human rights in waging our fight against terrorism. It is precisely universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including in the fight against terrorism, that will ensure the success of that fight and preserve the democratic and free principles of those societies which are being targeted by terrorists.

Slovenia welcomes the affirmation of the principle of the responsibility to protect. By endorsing that principle, world leaders have made a conceptual breakthrough in the prevention of future tragedies like those of Srebrenica, Rwanda and Darfur. For the first time, we have recognized our national and collective responsibility to act in cases of genocide and ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Slovenia considers the responsibility to protect to be an integral part of national responsibility to protect a country's people against atrocities. It is our understanding that the Security Council shares the responsibility to protect and that the use of the veto in the Council is fundamentally incompatible with that responsibility.

We welcome the establishment of a Democracy Fund and intend to contribute to it. We strongly support a strengthened role for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The strengthened role of the Office, to be financed from the United Nations regular budget, is good news for the realization of human rights on the ground.

The level of agreement on the Human Rights Council is a disappointment. Numerous countries wanted and expected more. Unfortunately, for the moment, we are left without the necessary vision of a new Council, even though, in the preparations for the summit, we formulated good proposals for the Council's structure and mandate.

Slovenia wants a standing Council that is a principal organ of the United Nations, able to deal with all human rights concerns in all countries at all times. We want a Council that better addresses rights and freedoms, without double standards. We want a

Council that could convene and act in every instance of massive violation of human rights. We want a Council able to make recommendations to other organs and agencies of the United Nations system so that human rights are truly integrated in all areas of the Organization. Finally, we want a Council that reflects the diversity of the modern world and that gives a proper voice to civil society through non-governmental organizations. In the course of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, Slovenia will continue to actively support the establishment of a strong and efficient new Human Rights Council.

I have already mentioned the dialogue of civilizations. That dialogue should be based on universal, fundamental values. No differentiation between "us" and "them" should be tolerated. Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the manifestation of our common fundamental values. They are the best answer for ensuring a dignified life in our globalized, fast-paced and increasingly unsafe world. On the basis of our wealth of traditions and history and creative diversity, all individuals should be informed of and be able to realize their rights and freedoms, as this is the best long-term foundation for peace and development. Educating people about human rights and dignity is a prerequisite for this goal, and we are thrilled to see that the need for such education is properly reflected in the outcome document. As a member State of the Human Security Network we are pleased that the issue of human security has been included in the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting and will continue to be discussed in the General Assembly.

Cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations deserves our priority attention in future. As experiences from a variety of geographic environments and conditions have shown — in particular in South-Eastern Europe and Africa — synergetic cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations can be very effective.

As Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), I call for the elaboration of a binding framework for permanent cooperation between the United Nations and that important regional organization as soon as possible. For 30 years now, OSCE has proved effective in very sensitive regions of the world. This year marks the thirtieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, which established OSCE. Thirty years ago, the integration of East and West began. Today, our main duty is to integrate civilizations. One of the areas that should be further developed is strengthening dialogue among civilizations. It may be that the supreme importance of our outcome document rests on that dialogue.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Norman José Caldera Cardenal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua.

Mr. Caldera Cardenal (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The struggle for democracy being waged by Nicaragua has transcended our borders, arousing feelings of solidarity and support in different parts of the world. The Nicaraguan people raised their voice and they were heard by Central America. From there, with the added strength of the seven fraternal countries that joined it, that voice resounded throughout the Andean Community, Mexico, the United States of America, Canada, the Rio Group, the Organization of American States (OAS), the European Union and Japan, to mention only the most recent cases. Indeed, the echo of that voice has reverberated at the United Nations in various reports and resolutions.

From this rostrum in the General Assembly Hall, I would like to convey to Member States the deep gratitude of the Nicaraguan people for the solidarity they have shown to us.

We come to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly at a turning point for our future, for we are in the throes of a struggle for democracy, a struggle to keep us from returning to our dark days and make them a thing of the past. Like the peoples of other United Nations Members who have fought for their freedom, thousands of Nicaraguans have died for it, victims of a perverse pendulum that swung from authoritarianism to totalitarianism. The lessons learned in those years left us a legacy that acknowledges the supreme value of freedom, democracy and, above all, peace.

Over the past four years, we have been striving for national revitalization and institutional overhaul based on transparency, freedom, the rule of law, social equality and individual initiative.

To carry out that Herculean task, we needed to overcome the errors of the past. That is why, with support from the rest of our continent, we have engaged in a frontal attack on corruption and impunity. We have also attempted to restore independence and integrity to our institutions, held hostage by private and partisan interests. Those efforts include the legal

sphere, where the absolute impartiality and objectivity of judges and magistrates, as well as an inclusive electoral system capable of ensuring respect for a popular vote cast in freedom, are imperative. It also requires that institutions act in the service of the higher interests of the nation and do not become weapons in political vendettas, used in campaigns to intimidate public officials in the executive branch.

The forces conniving to oppose democracy responded by escalating the breakdown in the constitutional order and the legitimate exercise of power. They then attempted to upset the balance of power, an essential principal of representative democracy in the inter-American system. The opposition attempted to execute a new type of coup d'état, corrupting State institutions by using them as instruments of political coercion. Instead of accepting the separation of powers, they appropriated the distribution of power, attempting to modify the powers of the President retroactively without consulting the Nicaraguan people. Only the Nicaraguan people can confer national sovereignty and presidential power, as they did at the polls in November 2001.

In the light of those threats to democracy, we have harnessed all our available resources under national legislation and international law. The Central American Court of Justice, the judicial arm of the Central American Integration System and rooted in democratic values, handed down a far-reaching decision on 29 March 2005 recognizing the separation of powers as a democratic principle. Under the Inter-American Democratic Charter, we also turned to the Organization of American States, which affirmed that the disturbing turn of events in Nicaragua was compromising the balance of power and the Government's legitimate exercise of power.

To overcome that situation, President Enrique Bolaños has expressed his continuing willingness to launch a broad national dialogue with all sectors. This does not mean, however — as the forces attempting to destroy our institutions have claimed — a dialogue aimed at surrendering democracy. Nor should it be a dialogue in which a gun is held to the President's head to force him to make concessions that would lead to a new type of dictatorship in Nicaragua — one never before seen in the history of Latin America — one that would bring back the trials and tribulations of earlier years and put an end to freedom and dash the democratic hopes of the Nicaraguan people and all nations. On the contrary, as the Organization of American States itself has said in its resolutions, it is a dialogue aimed at seeking democratic solutions, free from pressure, threats and coercion, and aimed at the cessation of any actions that could exacerbate the crisis and prevent the restoration of the balance of power.

We deplore the murder of journalists in any part of the world. In particular, we are concerned by the murders of three Nicaraguan journalists that took place over the past three years. We are concerned not only because the criminals cut short precious human lives, but also because the murders came at the height of the electoral campaign and constituted an attempt to terrorize our journalists and suppress freedom of expression in our young democracy. By attacking freedom of expression, they are harming the democratic processes. Those forces are well aware that freedom of expression is the voice of democracy. Freedom of expression protects all the other fundamental rights; without it, freedom loses its sustenance and democracy is orphaned.

We will continue doing our utmost to punish the guilty and break up all networks of terror and intimidation.

We are aware of the importance of the upcoming electoral processes for democracy in Nicaragua. Under the present circumstances, we must guarantee the Nicaraguan people that every vote will be duly registered, counted and respected, and that their sacred right to elect their authorities in conditions of absolute freedom will not be violated. As a result, we have asked the Secretary-General for technical assistance from the United Nations specialized agencies to help us hold elections and strengthen our democracy, complementing the work being carried out by the Organization of American States with assistance of the European Union.

Despite the energy, resources and efforts diverted from development in order to preserve democracy, Nicaragua has made major strides towards fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals. Destabilizing actions have not stopped the Nicaraguan people from beginning to enjoy the first fruits of the war against corruption and to benefit from an honest and transparent civil service that has succeeded in attracting foreign investment and winning the confidence of the international community.

The latest gauge of President Bolaños's success in enabling more and more Nicaraguans to lead a decent life can be found in the Human Development Report 2005, which states that we have progressed from the 118th to the 112th position. The best medium-term strategy for sustainable poverty reduction is to gain access to new markets and make international trade the driving force of growth, combining economic growth with social development in order to develop our human capital.

The Government of Nicaragua is promoting ratification of the Central American Free Trade Agreement between Central America, the Dominican Republic and the United States of America, which seeks to strengthen our economy, integrate us into the world and raise our population's standard of living, particularly that of the poorest sectors.

We welcomed with hope the words of President Bush in his statement to this Assembly:

> "A successful Doha Round will reduce and eliminate tariffs and other barriers on farm and industrial goods. It will end unfair agricultural subsidies ... Under Doha, every nation will gain — and the developing world stands to gain the most." (A/60/PV.2, p. 8)

May that be the case.

I am pleased to announce that in accordance with the request made by the heads of State and Government of the Central American Integration System to President Vicente Fox of Mexico on 12 September, we are today sending his Government the information that will make it possible to explore innovative finance mechanisms to help our countries deal with the crisis caused by the international price of oil.

Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon associated with economic and structural problems. The reduction of unemployment and social inequality and the expansion of social investment are determining factors for human development: in other words, sustainable economic growth within a democratic framework based on social and gender equality.

The Government of Nicaragua is carrying out social programmes to protect the rights and satisfy the basic needs of the most vulnerable sectors of Nicaraguan society — women, children, young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities. This protection extends to Nicaraguans abroad.

We reaffirm our priority commitment to promoting respect for the dignity of all our migrants, who, with their work and their efforts, contribute to socio-economic development that of their host country and that of their home country.

A duty of justice and solidarity moves Nicaragua to raise its voice in support of the just and legitimate aspiration of the Republic of China on Taiwan to become a member of the universal forum of the United Nations. The more than 20 million nationals of that country deserve to be regarded as an integral part of the peoples of the United Nations.

Nicaragua is grateful to the Central American Integration System for endorsing our candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2006-2007 term, reflecting the right of countries with small economies to be represented on an equal footing. At a time of reform of the Organization, Nicaragua is also grateful for the significant support it has received thus far and affirms its resolve to continue seeking the support of all Member States.

We hope to be elected and to share our experience in areas such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding and to support the just aspiration of developing countries to participate fully in decisions concerning security, with all the responsibility, benefits and consequences that that implies.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Ali Rodríguez Araque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Rodríguez Araque (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the end of the first five years of the third millennium, this Organization must go through a phase of maturity after sixty years of life, enough time to have formed a collective understanding of the major problems still facing mankind and to find the most effective ways to address them. Recent facts show that this is the reality that we shall have to deal with for some time in the future.

There are many challenges facing the United Nations, both internal and global problems. By way of illustration, I should like to refer to two of those challenges: one internal, namely, the much-needed democratization of this Organization and the other external, the problem of poverty, which is the most important, growing and alarming problem of

contemporary society. I should like to invite all delegations to give these two problems careful thought.

Democracy, at the current stage of human development, is the highest form of political organization. Democracy, owing to its very nature and as a vital condition, implies the equal exercise of rights as the ideal way to reach the best possible living conditions. What is valid for one country taken individually applies even more to organizations in which many sovereign nations are represented, all with equal rights.

The United Nations is the most emblematic case in the modern society of nations. As a result, it should be the true embodiment and example of the equal exercise of democratic rights. If we agree on this basic principle, one question immediately comes to mind: is this Organization a democratic institution? Are its practices useful, as we have seen in very recent decisions adopted by a small number of Members in a document presented in the first meeting? Is this a useful example of a transparent democratic exercise on the part of the sovereign nations represented here?

The answer, regrettably, is a resounding "no". On the contrary, what we have seen is a dangerous process in which oligarchies are being built, where a small group of countries usurp the right to take decisions without taking into account the vast majority of countries that ultimately represent the overwhelming majority of the global population. This is what usually happens with matters affecting the fate of billions of human beings.

For those reasons, when we talk about reform, the first thing to do is to define the nature of this reform, which can have no other goal than the democratization of this Organization. That means giving decision-making power in fundamental matters to the General Assembly and ending once and for all the Organization's oligarchic and, very often, autocratic practices, which diminish its authority in the eyes of the world.

In our humble but firm opinion, this is the major challenge the Organization faces internally. Its very existence depends on the successful resolution of this issue. We have no doubt about that, and let us not doubt it.

In the external sphere, the most important challenge lies in the agonizing escalation that daily traps millions of human beings living in poverty. Poverty — as we have heard here in many statements — is the result of an unjust system of distribution of the earthly goods of men that therefore denies men any spiritual value. It is an unfair system of distribution that stems from a distorted matrix whose dominant force is a ruthless thirst for profit and in which growing wealth is based on the expansion and deepening of poverty. This is the reality that we see day after day, not only, to the surprise of many, in the so-called poor countries, but also in countries where opulence is obscenely on display, every second, through the mass media, attracting millions of people who are trying to improve their living conditions, only to crash into a wall raised by those who preach market freedom and the free movement of capital but who do not tolerate the movement of human beings except when they are needed as a labour force to further expand their wealth.

This is the painful truth that the tragedy of Katrina has revealed. It is a painful reality that has profoundly shaken all of those for whom nothing about human beings is strange, wherever it may occur.

These problems should have become the focal points of the entire document that was approved in a strange "consensus" — a word I do not hesitate to place between quotation marks. Little attention has been paid to this drama. But the drama is there; it is boiling across the world. That generates instability, because if there is one thing that human society is not made for, it is suicide. It seeks desperate forms of survival, and that is why, as the great Peruvian Cesar Vallejo said once, it lights its captive torch and prays angrily. These are days of suffering but also days of anger in many parts of the world, and that generates instability. If we want stability in the world, let us apply social justice, a new system of distribution among regions and a new system of solidarity for distribution within nations that cannot be limited to charity or assistance often delivered under humiliating conditions.

There are many ideas that bring us to this meeting, I am sure. On some of the most important problems we have already defined our position in previous statements. We will continue doing so in this session. For the time being, we would simply add a basic item: how difficult it is to realize man's democratic dream when man finds himself prevented from satisfying his most basic conditions for a life of

dignity: health, nutrition, a roof over his head and the opportunity to enjoy basic rights.

We trust in the wisdom of the peoples and the new leadership that through its voice speaks for silent millions. We trust in the struggle of those who, as the great Martí said, have thrown in their lot with the poor of the earth. Thus some day, in the not-so-distant future, we will find ourselves in a better world, with a life worth living and a United Nations strengthened by the essential values of men and women of dignity, who are the majority on this planet.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Abdulla Al-Rumaihi, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

Mr. Al-Rumaihi (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to extend to you, Mr. President, our congratulations upon your election to the presidency of this sixtieth session of the General Assembly. We wish you every success in discharging your functions. I would also like to extend thanks and appreciation to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, for his valuable efforts in conducting the work of the Assembly's fifty-ninth session, especially his efforts to reach a consensus on the final document of the world summit of 2005.

I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his tireless efforts to strengthen the role of our international Organization.

World leaders who met at United Nations Headquarters to follow up on the outcome of the Millennium Summit and the coordinated and integrated implementation and follow-up of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the social, economic and related fields have managed to adopt a document that calls for implementing reforms in the United Nations and for taking bolder collective steps to combat poverty, achieve development, establish international security and uphold human rights.

The world today is experiencing extremely difficult economic conditions which pose a real threat to the process of social and economic development in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, and pose a major threat to the development of their peoples. That situation is the result of such factors as a decline in official development assistance; unfair international terms of trade; the imposition of restrictions on the access of their exports to world markets; unfair prices for their commodity exports; a heavy external debt burden; and the adverse effects of globalization.

Despite the progress made in many fields of international cooperation, the problems of hunger, poverty and such diseases as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis have taken on horrific dimensions and continue to pose major challenges to the international community. Unless the latter makes concerted efforts to accelerate equitable development in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, the Millennium Goal of halving poverty by 2015 will remain elusive.

The international community, by resolving, at the Millennium Summit, to declare war on poverty by launching an ongoing campaign to make the right to development a reality for all peoples, has made an implicit commitment to creating a social, economic and political environment in the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, that would be more favourable to the translation into concrete reality of the right to development for all of their peoples. That would provide cohesion and equitable social integration for their societies as well as a real opportunity to eradicate poverty, enabling them to enjoy full, productive and gainful employment. The international community also resolved at the Millennium Summit to seek to achieve a fair and just globalization that embraces everyone, in order to spare the developing countries, especially the least developed countries, the danger of being marginalized within the international economy.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders affirmed that international cooperation was the most important factor in making the world a better place to live in. They also affirmed that free trade, liberalization of the economy and interdependence are the best means to accelerate equitable economic development in the developing countries.

The international community is at a critical stage of the negotiations related to the Doha Development Agenda. Those negotiations made concrete progress last year in some difficult and controversial areas. Agreement was reached on the launching of negotiations regarding the question of trade concessions, one of the four questions which were left,

by agreement, outside the scope of the Doha Programme of Action: investment, competition, trade and environment and trade concessions. However, that agreement by the developed countries was, regrettably, conditional on the non-holding of negotiations on the other three questions.

We are looking forward to the achievement of solid, ambitious progress at the sixth World Trade Organization Conference in Hong Kong, and we hope that we will be able to conclude negotiations in 2006.

The developing countries have fulfilled their pledges, and we hope that the upcoming negotiations regarding the implementation of the outcome of this summit will translate into reality the global partnership for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals. We hope that the right to development will become a living reality and that the developed countries will honour their pledges, including increasing official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product, and will accelerate the process of forgiving the external debt of all poor countries.

We have often stated that peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly. All of those resolutions recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which is the right to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds as its capital; withdrawal from the occupied Golan Heights up to the border of 4 June 1967; and full withdrawal from the rest of the Lebanese territories still under occupation.

On that basis, the international mediation process produced the road map, which affirms the principle of land for peace and calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and the establishment of the State of Palestine.

The Arab summit, meeting in Beirut in March 2002, endorsed an international initiative calling for the normalization of relations between the Arab States and Israel in return for Israel's withdrawal to the 1967 border.

The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is an important and positive first step, which, we hope, will be followed by similar steps in all the Palestinian territories and the other occupied Arab territories, in accordance with internationally binding resolutions and the relevant initiatives and agreements, in order to bring about stability, security and a comprehensive and just peace for all States and peoples of the region.

I cannot fail to mention the difficult conditions experienced by the fraternal Iraqi people. We hope that the new constitution will embody the hopes and aspirations of the Iraqi people and contribute to the establishment of security and stability in the country. We hope also that it will take into consideration the interests of all segments of the Iraqi population, that all the people will feel that they all are part of the established system, and that the unity and the national identity of Iraq will be preserved.

Believing as it does in the great importance of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) to international peace and security, the State of Qatar has acceded to the Treaty and calls from this rostrum on all States to do so. It also seeks to transform the Middle East region into a zone that is totally free from all kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

My country has unambiguously condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. It has also supported all Security Council resolutions related to the question of terrorism, and it has cooperated with the international community in implementing those agreements. However, we feel that success in eradicating that phenomenon requires that we deal with its underlying causes, including the social, economic and political aspects that provide a fertile breeding ground for terrorism.

We also support the idea of convening an international conference on terrorism and of drawing up an international strategy to combat it. In that context, we feel that defining terrorism and clearly distinguishing it from the struggle waged by peoples in exercise of their legitimate right to defend their freedom and enjoy self-determination must be the most important norm and enjoy international consensus. This is a right that is enshrined in all international norms and practices.

Our world today more than ever needs a comprehensive authority and frame of reference that is qualified to perform its role as an international instrument; one that seeks to achieve international cooperation in resolving international problems of a social and economic nature, as well as consolidating security and stability, maintaining international peace,

and enhancing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Moreover, we must earnestly seek to respect this global diversity, protect it and allow it to prosper.

Hence, we feel that the proposal to establish a standing Human Rights Council, with a smaller membership, to be elected by a two-thirds majority only, merits further study in serious intergovernmental negotiations, with a view to achieving consensus on the establishment of the proposed Council, its membership, its mandate, and the organ destined to be its parent body, which we hope will be the General Assembly. We must commit ourselves to human rights, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and we must fully comply with internationally recognized human rights standards.

The question of expanding the Security Council and the concept of collective security require further study and intergovernmental negotiations so as to arrive at a consensus on these important questions.

In this context, we support the Secretary-General on the question of reforming the United Nations Secretariat for the reasons indicated in his report entitled "In Larger Freedom". However, we feel that any proposals to reform the Secretariat are extremely important and must be the subject of careful study, discussion and negotiation by the General Assembly.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

Several representatives have indicated their wish to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and five minutes for the possible second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Williams (United Kingdom): I am taking the floor in right of reply to the remarks made yesterday by His Excellency Mr. Rafael Bielsa, Minister for Foreign Relations, International Trade and Worship of the Argentine Republic, on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands.

The United Kingdom's position on this issue is well known and was last set out in detail by the United Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Sir Emyr Jones Parry, in a written right of reply to the statement by His Excellency President Néstor Carlos Kirchner of the Argentine Republic in the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on 14 September 2005.

The United Kingdom has no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There can be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wish.

Mr. Alaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): This morning the Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates made some unacceptable claims against the territorial integrity of my country.

As we have clearly and repeatedly placed on record our position on this issue on previous occasions, I do not need to go into detail. The Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to its international obligations, especially those arising from the Memorandum of Understanding of 1971. We firmly believe that misunderstandings over the interpretation or application of that Memorandum of Understanding, if any, should be addressed with goodwill and through mutually agreed mechanisms in order to find an acceptable solution.

Meanwhile, my Government has always welcomed the interaction and exchange of views between officials of Iran and the United Arab Emirates on issues of interest and concern to both our countries. We believe that dialogue between our two Governments can play a determining role in removing any existing misunderstandings.

Mr. Desmoures (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to what has been said by the representative of the United Kingdom on the question of the Malvinas Islands, the delegation of Argentina reiterates in full the statement that was made yesterday by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship of Argentina before this Assembly. In this respect, let it be recalled that, as was determined by the United Nations on several occasions, the form of putting an end to the dispute over the sovereignty, referring to the question of the Malvinas Islands, is only through bilateral negotiations between the Governments of the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom.

Argentina reiterates its willingness to undertake such negotiations.

Mr. Al-Mazroui (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): With regard to the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on Iran's occupation of the three islands of the United Arab Emirates, I would merely state that the United Arab Emirates, which has repeatedly expressed its principled and firm position on this national issue, wishes to express its extreme disappointment over the false claims made by the Iranian representative. Those claims reflect the illegitimate behaviour of the Iranian Government, which ignores all the historical, legal and demographic facts that prove these three islands — the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa — fall under the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates.

The United Arab Emirates would like to reiterate that the Iranian presence in these United Arab Emirates islands since 1971 is an illegal military occupation and in form and content violates the tenets of all international relations, the United Nations Charter and relevant international law. It must therefore be removed.

I also wish to reiterate the words of our Foreign Minister in a speech today, who called on the Islamic Republic of Iran to reconsider the policy of occupying the islands and to respond in a serious manner to the peace initiatives that have been proposed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates in order to settle this issue peacefully, either through bilateral and constructive, peaceful negotiations that would remedy the reasons for this crisis, or by referring it to the International Court of Justice and abiding by the Court's legal decision in order to guarantee a just, comprehensive and lasting solution; this would strengthen good-neighbourly ties and cooperation between our two countries and peoples and consolidate stability, security, peace and development in the Arabian Gulf area.

The Acting President: We have heard the speakers in their exercise of the right of reply.

Organization of work

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that the meeting of the General Assembly to consider the first report of the General Committee, document A/60/250, originally scheduled for this evening, has been postponed until tomorrow, 20 September, in the evening, immediately following the adjournment of the general debate. The reason — as representatives may guess — is that there have been some problems with the electrical circuits in the building, which has led to computers and telephones not working. Because of the logistical problems following that breakdown, the General Committee meeting will be postponed. Perhaps representatives will convey that information to their colleagues who are working on the General Committee.

The meeting rose at 7.20 p.m.

United Nations A/60/PV.15

General Assembly

Sixtieth session

Official Records

15th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 20 September 2005, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Eliasson ..... (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Kiribati.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Tong: Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your election to the presidency, and my assurances that Kiribati will support you during your term of office. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the outgoing President, Mr. Jean Ping, for his able and effective leadership during the fifty-ninth session.

During last week's High-level Plenary Meeting, we discussed, among other issues, the future of this Organization and what we expect from it. We heard about the achievements made by our Organization over the past 60 years. We express our gratitude to all nations for the cooperation and support that led to those achievements. I would like to congratulate the Secretary-General as well as his staff, for his leadership of our Organization at these difficult and trying times.

We also heard about the shortcomings of our Organization. While we recognize and fully endorse the need for reform in the Organization, we are concerned that many of the shortcomings in terms of the promotion of sustainable development in Member nations, in particular in the small island developing States, are the result of our inability to deliver on commitments made in the past.

Individual Member nations have the prime responsibility for achieving sustainable development within their borders, but with globalization and the increasing interdependency of our world, individual nations cannot achieve sustainable development acting alone. To attain sustainable development in small island developing States, the need for external cooperation and support is understandably more pronounced.

Having taken stock of progress over the past 60 years, the challenge now is to consider measures by which we can collectively and through the United Nations address the needs and concerns highlighted during the High-level Plenary Meeting. Of particular concern are the special needs of the least developed countries and small island developing States.

While Kiribati may be categorized as a least developed country and a small island developing State, the people of Kiribati have a genuine desire to develop themselves and at the same time to develop their country. As their elected representatives, we have a clear mandate and duty to make our best efforts to meet their development aspirations.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Population issues are a major challenge in our development efforts. Concerted efforts to promote effective family planning have been given greater focus in our national development strategies. The growing number of unemployed youth brings with it new social issues. We are committed to directing the energy of our youth to productive and worthwhile pursuits. Employment opportunities abroad for both men and women, such as the arrangements in place with foreign shipping companies, fishing companies and cruise operators, will be expanded and new opportunities explored. The New Zealand Government's Pacific Access Category scheme is a very welcome model that merits closer scrutiny by other countries.

The spiralling cost of fuel is an issue of grave concern to us. The impact of rising fuel costs has been hardest on the least developed countries, which are also the least able to afford it. Therefore, the need to accelerate the development of alternative sources of energy, including clean and renewable energy, is now greater than it ever was.

We firmly believe that our fishery resources can provide us with the basis for achieving a sustainable future, but in order to be able to do so, we shall need the assistance of our development partners in providing the necessary incentives through the provision of credit schemes to those investors who are able and willing to develop onshore facilities within resource-owning countries.

But before we can achieve that, and if we are to achieve our Millennium Development Goals, we shall continue to be reliant on the official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income being met.

Environmental issues and, in particular, climate change and sea-level rise are security issues for countries comprising low-lying coral atolls, such as Kiribati. A global and concerted effort, including stronger political commitment, is required to achieve the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We are appreciative of the support we have received and continue to receive in developing adaptation measures to climate change and sea-level rise. We nevertheless acknowledge the need now to seriously consider the option of having to relocate our peoples when necessary — an option that can be meaningfully addressed only within this forum.

Kiribati fully endorses the need for comprehensive reform in the United Nations. The environment in which the Organization now operates is so very different from that of 1945. Reform must take place to ensure that the Organization continues to be a relevant institution for its Member countries.

Terrorism threatens all. Kiribati condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and we support the global fight against terrorism. We have noted with increasing alarm the globalization of terror. We cannot afford to be complacent about terrorism and will contribute, within our resource constraints, to the war against terror. We seek support from those able and willing in the implementation and enforcement of counter-terrorism legislation we have passed in compliance with our obligations as a member of the global community.

Kiribati has contributed to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. We will continue to contribute to that regional effort as long as there is need. Kiribati is also interested in contributing civilian police to peacekeeping missions of the United Nations.

Kiribati supports an expansion of the permanent and non-permanent membership of the Security Council. In our view, those countries, such as Japan, that are significant contributors to United Nations programmes promoting peace, security and development merit a permanent seat on the Security Council.

As we consider reform of the United Nations and as we celebrate 60 years of the United Nations, we believe that now is also the time to consider the issue of Taiwan and its 23 million people. Taiwan is a country where democracy thrives, where the rule of law prevails and where human rights are respected. Taiwan has also remained able and willing to make significant contributions to the collaborative efforts to secure global peace, security and prosperity.

We also believe that, whatever the views are on the question of whether Taiwan is a domestic issue or not, there can be no justification for supporting threatening initiatives, such as the so called anti-secession law, which could have such far-reaching effects on regional and global stability.

I am confident that, under your leadership, Sir, we will work with unity of purpose and perhaps with less posturing to address the challenges before us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Kiribati for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Item 9 of the provisional agenda (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Gomes (Guinea-Bissau) (*spoke in Portuguese; interpretation from the French text furnished by the delegation*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. Given your role at this critical moment, Guinea-Bissau, in its capacity as a Vice-President at this session, will spare no effort in supporting you in your work.

I also extend my warmest congratulations to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the sisterly Republic of Gabon, on the commitment and skill he demonstrated during his presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on his excellent work at the head of our Organization to strengthen its credibility, promote essential international solidarity, and achieve consensus on major issues relating to security, counter-terrorism, development and human rights.

The world awaits the dawn of a new order, which will require a more realistic and democratic international political framework, global commitment, and the collective will of all Member States to meet the challenges facing humankind in the context of increasing interdependence. We endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, and I reiterate my country's readiness to contribute to all global agreements that will allow us to meet the current challenges of development, security, the fight against international terrorism, respect for human rights, and institutional reform of the United Nations, in particular that of the Security Council, where Africa should enjoy the legitimate right to hold two permanent seats.

To carry out these reforms, it is important that there be political will, based on the collective action of States, which is the foundation of this international system. I cannot overemphasize the fact that cooperation which could lead to this collective action will be possible only if the policies of our countries take account of the needs of our own citizens, as well as the needs of others, because we are part of the same human family, forced to live together on this same planet, and we have an obligation to share it and protect it.

In this regard, I would express my concern vis-à-vis the phenomenon of globalization. We are aware of the enormous potential and advantages of a well-managed globalization and all that it has to offer in the economic, financial, commercial, technological and communication fields. However, it is equally important, at this stage of globalization, to recognize that it has not been sufficiently inclusive. Exclusion and marginalization in international relations are the negative effects of globalization. These are factors that contribute to the existence and proliferation of conflicts — situations which require properly-coordinated, global responses, as well as multilateral frameworks for dialogue, agreement and effective interaction.

Inter-State conflict, civil wars, organized crime, terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons are phenomena which threaten international security. But such threats are not limited solely to these spheres. They also involve poverty, pandemics and natural disasters affecting the planet.

The growing link between security and development is proof that the gesture of solidarity desired with regard to financing for development of the poor is needed more than ever. This responsible and

positive attitude is one of the main pillars in our efforts to pursue the Millennium Development Goals, a challenge which mankind cannot fail to meet. I hope that there will be sufficient political will so that the new partnership for development which we wish to see established among States in the very near future will dispel any doubts and fulfil the hopes raised during the internationally-organized conferences within the framework of the United Nations in the economic, financial and social and related spheres.

The outcome document we have just adopted at the conclusion of the recent High-level Plenary Meeting is still insufficient, but it is forward-looking. We must underscore the fact that discussions, agreements and negotiations need to be pursued in a transparent fashion in order to achieve desired results by all Member States.

Africa has rightfully been the recent subject of increased attention on the part of the international community. I am pleased to express our satisfaction at the decision recently adopted at the Summit of the G-8 regarding debt cancellation for some African countries, and the possibility of extending this measure to other poor countries, including my country, Guinea-Bissau.

On 1 October, Guinea-Bissau will continue and conclude the process of complete return to constitutional normalcy through presidential elections. The success of this political transitional period that began in September 2003 is the fruitful result of balanced relations among institutions of the Republic, based on the separation of powers and characterized by good governance.

We must recognize that this has not always been easy, and quite often we have faced situations which go beyond our national capacity to resolve. The framework for constant cooperation and agreement with the international community has been an important instrument in following up the socio-economic situation and the political internal process. We wish to express our thanks to the Member States of the Economic Community of West African States, the European Union, the international community and Portuguese-speaking countries for contributing to the political transitional process in our country. Without this support for Guinea-Bissau it would have been difficult for us to face the numerous constraints during the transitional phase.

The role played by the United Nations system — the Economic and Social Council's ad hoc group and the Group of Friends of Guinea-Bissau in particular — deserves special mention and our most heartfelt thanks.

The support of the international community has been very important in the success of the transitional period in Guinea-Bissau. However, more decisive action is required to meet the challenges of reconstruction and the rebuilding of the infrastructure in my country, to improve the economy and create minimal conditions for governability and to strengthen the foundation of a democratic State, which we wish to see in Guinea-Bissau. These factors are essential for peace and for political and social stability.

Once again, I would call from this rostrum for the support of the international community in the November Donor Round-Table Conference with partners in peace for development in order to adopt together a document on the national strategy to reduce poverty. This goal is in line with the concerns of the United Nations aimed at more effective assistance to countries in post-conflict situations, contained in the proposal to create a Peacebuilding Commission, which we fully support.

We recognize respect for the rules of democracy, for human rights and good economic and financial governance. We feel that they are the foundation for the rule of law. We reaffirm the commitment of my Government, in strict compliance with our constitution, to work in close cooperation with all institutions of the Republic to create conditions aimed at promoting national reconciliation, peace and domestic political stability, to consolidate our relations of friendship, brotherhood and solidarity with our neighbours and to restore a climate of trust, credibility and effective, lasting partnership with the entire international community for socio-economic development in our country.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Carlos Gomes, Jr., Prime Minister of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Somsavat Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Mr. Lengsavad (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*spoke in Laotian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset I would like to congratulate you upon your unanimous election as President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. I am confident that with your experience and diplomatic skills you will guide our deliberations to a successful outcome. I would also like to convey our great appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, President of the fifty-ninth session of the Assembly, for the efficient manner in which he presided over our work as well as for the fine accomplishments recorded during the session.

Sixty years after its creation, the United Nations, our only multilateral Organization, is at a crossroads. When the Organization was established, the promotion of peace and security, as well as that of economic and social development, were its main objectives. It was then conceived to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and insecurity, to reduce and eradicate poverty and to move towards economic prosperity for all.

Today, the world is still filled with conflicts, violence, insecurity, hunger, poverty and despair. We have therefore every reason to act collectively to reform and strengthen this multilateral institution to enable it to effectively address the many complex challenges the world is now facing.

In this reform process, revitalizing the General Assembly has now become one of the crucial issues for consideration by Member States. In our opinion, the Assembly, which comprises all the Members of the United Nations, should continue to play a central role as the chief deliberative, policy-making and representative organ. It should serve as a forum for high-level policy statements, as well as for the consideration, of, inter alia, agenda items of special political importance or urgency. In order to strengthen the role and authority of the General Assembly, Member States should stress the need to fully respect and restore the balance between the principal organs of the United Nations, within their respective purviews and mandates, in accordance with the Charter.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, the leaders of the States Members of the United Nations resolved to strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. In this regard, we regret that the seventh Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in New York from 2 to 27 May 2005, was unable to reach consensus on the substantive questions relating to the three pillars of the Treaty. The Lao People's Democratic Republic is of the view that all States parties should remain committed to the NPT and believes that it should continue to have cornerstone status in the context of global disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The world economy continues to be characterized by slow and uneven growth and instability. Globalization may offer a great many opportunities to a number of countries. However, it also presents numerous challenges and risks for the developing world, particularly the most vulnerable groups, namely, the least developed countries and the landlocked developing countries. In reality, the process of globalization among and within countries has not produced equal benefits. The gap between the developed and developing world is widening, and we are all greatly concerned about increased poverty in many developing countries.

In order for developing countries to reap the benefits of globalization, an enabling external economic environment for development is required. To that end, we should all strive to achieve greater coherence among the international trading, monetary and financial systems.

Among the most vulnerable groups, the landlocked developing countries deserve special attention. The Almaty Programme of Action, which was adopted in 2003, was a landmark document that set out five priority areas. The São Paulo Consensus, which was adopted in 2004 by the eleventh United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, recognized, among other things, that the landlocked developing countries were small and vulnerable economies. Those documents, together with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, constitute a significant achievement on which the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries is building in order to move forward in promoting its legitimate cause. In my capacity as Chairman of that Group, I appeal to the international community for sympathy and support for our endeavours.

In order to strengthen unity and solidarity among the countries of the South, and as a follow-up to the

implementation of the Havana Programme of Action, adopted by the first South Summit in 2000, the second South Summit of the Group of 77 and China was held in Doha, Qatar, from 12 to 16 June 2005. The Doha Declaration and Plan of Action, which were adopted at the second South Summit, called for a more energetic effort to deepen and revitalize South-South cooperation, with a view to enhancing sustained economic growth and the sustainable development of the countries of the South.

Last April in Jakarta, Indonesia, the Asian-African Summit was held with the objective of reinvigorating the spirit of the 1955 Bandung Conference and of charting future cooperation between the two continents towards a new Asian-African strategic partnership. That partnership, which was inaugurated at the Summit, constitutes an important building block for the further strengthening of South-South cooperation.

I would like commend Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his tireless efforts to ensure the success of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly. The Lao People's Democratic Republic highly values the outcome document adopted by our heads of State or Government, in which they reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration and their commitment to implementing effectively and fully the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries.

Given the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of Member States, the second South Summit, held in Doha, called upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the Charter, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness, is the cause of enormous material loss and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

On the Korean Peninsula, we welcome the recent resumption of the six-party talks, which have yielded important progress. The Lao People's Democratic Republic expresses the hope that the concerned parties will further deploy joint efforts and undertake concrete actions based on the principles and commitments contained in the Joint Declaration of 19 September 2005 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula, thus contributing to the promotion of peace, security, stability and development cooperation in the wider Asia-Pacific region.

In the Middle East, although the situation remains difficult and complex, a degree of progress has been made that ought to be further promoted. In order to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, the question of Palestine in all its aspects should be resolved in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, the Lao People's Democratic Republic reaffirms its unwavering support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, to exercise their right to self-determination, including their right to establish an independent State of Palestine living side by side with Israel.

The situation in Iraq continues to be a matter of concern to the international community. It is our sincere hope that durable peace, security and stability can soon be secured in that country, paving the way for the Iraqi people to be truly the masters of their own future and destiny.

The year 2005 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the proclamation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a historic event of great significance in the political life of the nation. In general, the national economy is continuing to grow at a sustained pace. The rate of growth reached 7.2 per cent in the period 2004-2005. Foreign investment is on the increase, political stability, social tranquillity and security are assured and the living conditions of the people are continuing to improve. The multi-ethnic Lao people, while enjoying fundamental rights, including the right to believe or not to believe in any religion, stand firmly united in nation-building. Furthermore, the Lao People's Democratic Republic remains committed to implementing a policy aimed at establishing a State based on the rule of law so as to ensure freedom, democracy and the legitimate interests of its citizens, as well as of foreign residents and other foreigners living and working in the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Externally, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has vigorously participated in multifaceted regional and international activities aimed at fostering peace, stability, friendship and the promotion of development cooperation. One of the greatest events for the Lao

People's Democratic Republic was the historic hosting of the tenth Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in November 2004, which was followed by the successful holding, from 24 to 29 July 2005, of the thirty-eighth ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, the post-ministerial conferences and the twelfth ASEAN Regional Forum. Those events reflect the great sense of responsibility of the multi-ethnic Lao people as a whole in the discharge of the country's chairmanship of ASEAN during the past 12 months.

Furthermore, those accomplishments have significantly contributed to narrowing the development gaps within ASEAN member countries and fostering the realization of an ASEAN community. That community has three pillars: the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, all of which are closely intertwined and mutually reinforcing for the purpose of ensuring durable peace, stability and shared prosperity in the region.

Mr. Gillerman (Israel), Vice-President, took the Chair.

ASEAN hopes that friendly countries and the United Nations will become more involved in the implementation of the Vientiane Action Programme and the ASEAN Development Fund for regional economic integration, particularly in the areas of human resource development, infrastructure, information technology and energy development.

Peace cannot be achieved without development, and development in turn cannot be realized without cooperation among nations, with the United Nations playing an important catalytic role.

The United Nations — the sole multilateral, universal Organization — cannot be strengthened, however, if it does not embrace, in equal measure, the concerns of all, including the small, vulnerable, and weak States, which make up the majority of its Members. In that respect, we should all remind ourselves that not only will our words and the principles we espouse be judged by future generations, but so, too, will the actions that we undertake to bring about development for the whole of humanity.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Silvan Shalom, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel.

Mr. Shalom (Israel): It is my unique pleasure to praise His Excellency Ambassador Dan Gillerman, my emissary to the United Nations, who is in the Chair at present, upon his election to the post of Vice-President at this session of the General Assembly, and to wish him much success.

These are optimistic times in the Middle East. The iron wall that has defined Israel's relations with most of the Arab and Muslim world for generations, is coming down. Israel's contacts with Arab and Muslim States are growing at a rate never seen before. Countries like Pakistan and others that in the past refused to acknowledge our shared humanity, today extend their hands in friendship and recognition. Relations with key Muslim States, such as Turkey, are flourishing, while our peaceful ties with both Egypt and Jordan are constantly improving.

Here in New York this week, I have had the honour of meeting with more than 10 of my colleagues from the Arab and Muslim world — a number unthinkable just two years ago. Those meetings have been friendly, as is only fitting for countries that are not in conflict — either territorially, or economically. Israel welcomes this new readiness for contact, and we encourage our neighbours to build on the foundations that we are now laying. Contacts between Israel and its Arab and Muslim neighbours are good for the region, and good for peace.

We all share a common interest in building a region of tolerance and cooperation — a region where the moderates have the initiative, not the extremists, whose violence has set the agenda for so long. Indeed, those who genuinely wish to help the Palestinians and to bring them the benefits of peace and prosperity must realize that building contacts and cooperation with Israel is a crucial element in that process.

Possibilities for cooperation abound. In fields as diverse as agriculture, health, the environment, transportation and electricity, the potential benefits of Middle East regional cooperation are immense. Such cooperation can bring tangible and immediate economic benefits, as Israel's improving relations with Jordan and Egypt have shown.

Unfortunately, many of our ties with the Arab and Muslim world are still deep in the shadows, hidden from the public eye. Today, I call on my Arab and Muslim colleagues to bring our contacts out into the light of day, so that our peoples may understand our

shared desire to work with each other to bring peace and prosperity to our region. I call on the leaders of the Arab and Muslim world, to join us in speaking to our populations of peace rather than conflict, of reasons to cooperate, rather than reasons to boycott.

In November of this year, I will sit alongside my Arab and Muslim colleagues at two international gatherings: the World Summit on the Information Society, in Tunisia; and the summit of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, in Barcelona. I call upon the international community and my Arab and Muslim counterparts to work together with us to ensure that those meetings result in concrete projects that will help reinforce our peace efforts on the ground.

This is also the time for the international community to renew its investment in the future of the Middle East by reviving the multilateral track of the Middle East peace talks.

Just one week ago, Israel completed the evacuation of all Israeli communities in the Gaza Strip. Entire families — many of whom had lived and tilled those lands for three generations — were called upon by their Government to leave and to begin their lives anew. Today, there are no more Israelis in Gaza. Israeli military rule is now over. Responsibility for the affairs of Gaza and its residents is now in Palestinian hands. Israel's actions have opened the door to a new future, and we invite our neighbours to walk with us together through that door.

We are committed to the road map, and we wish to get back to its full implementation. To do that, we need a partner. A partner who is committed, as we are, to the peaceful resolution of our differences, and to the democratic and universal principles on which peace is founded.

Israel attaches great importance to the Palestinian assumption of responsibility. In it lies the key to progress towards peace. The transfer of responsibility for Gaza provides the Palestinian side with the chance to take their fate into their own hands; an opportunity not just to say that they want to govern, but to show that they are ready and able to do so. Gaza, we hope, will serve as a model for how the Palestinian Authority can build a functioning, democratic and peaceful society.

Recognizing the significance of this moment, Israel is taking great pains to ensure that Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas is given every opportunity to establish his authority. We want to promote conditions that will benefit ordinary Palestinians, without posing a security threat to Israel.

Israel has expressed its strong support for international aid and assistance for the social and economic development of Gaza, and we are committed to facilitating those efforts. Constructive international engagement is crucial to the Palestinian Authority's success. The international community's priority now must be ensuring that the Palestinian Authority and its institutions can deliver the services and outcomes their people and ours expect and deserve.

Economic reconstruction, of course, is not enough. The Palestinian Authority must also deliver on its commitment to end the campaign of terror against Israel. For Israel, security is an issue on which we will never compromise. We insist on the end of terror and the dismantlement of its infrastructure, for the safety of our citizens, and so that our peace efforts can succeed.

Turning Gaza into a model of success requires that the Palestinian Authority act to promote and protect democracy from its enemies. Here, as with security, there is no room for discounts. Simply holding elections is no guarantee of moderation and responsible government.

Two days ago in Gaza, the terrorist organization Hamas held a rally of 10,000 armed men dedicated to a holy war against Israel. Like Al-Qaida and the other organizations in the global network of terror, Hamas seeks to destroy everything that the international community and the moderates in our region seek to build: tolerance, democracy and peace. Hamas is responsible for the deliberate murder of hundreds of Israeli civilians, amongst them scores of women and children. Israel cannot and will not grant legitimacy to such an organization. We will not cooperate with its desire to participate in the forthcoming Palestinian elections. And we call on the international community to make clear its own opposition to the inclusion of such terrorists in the democratic process. If Gaza is indeed to be the positive model we all wish to see, then it is those who promote dialogue, not violence, who must be empowered.

The central threat to global security and to renewed momentum towards dialogue and peace in the Middle East today is Iran and its nuclear ambitions. As the speech before this Assembly by the newly elected president of Iran so clearly demonstrated, Iran's fanatic

regime remains determined to proceed with its nuclear weapons programme. Israel welcomes the efforts of the international community — in particular France, Britain and Germany, backed by the United States — to deny Iran the ability to terrorize the world with nuclear weapons.

The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency is meeting at this very moment in Vienna to discuss this urgent matter. I call on them to stop this evil regime from acquiring nuclear weapons. The security and stability of the entire globe is at stake. This is why it is essential and urgent that the Security Council take action. The international community must rally as one and use all the means at its disposal to stop Iran before it goes nuclear. We must not allow the fate of mankind to rest in the hands of the tyrants of Tehran.

In January of this year, this Assembly convened in special session to commemorate the Holocaust and pay tribute to the brave soldiers and nations who freed European Jewry and the world from the calamity of that darkest nightmare. Israel commends the community of nations for standing up in unison on this anniversary in commitment to the cry "never again". We commend the Secretary-General's and this Assembly's recognition that Holocaust remembrance must be a universal commitment. Ultimately, it is only the determined defence of the universal values of tolerance and the sanctity of each human life that will protect us from tyranny and extremism.

In this spirit, Israel calls on the General Assembly to adopt a resolution initiated by Israel and other like-minded countries commemorating the Holocaust and calling for global educational efforts to ensure that its lessons are learnt. Especially today, the day the world's greatest Nazi-hunter, Simon Wiesenthal, has passed away, we are reminded that the Holocaust is passing from human memory to history. As the generation of survivors leaves us, who will tell their story, if not us?

The special session to commemorate the Holocaust is only one example, of the welcome shift in the attitude of this institution towards Israel. Our recent election as Vice-President of this Assembly is another. I wish to commend the Secretary-General for his unique contribution to this positive trend. Israel's relations with the United Nations are better today than they have ever been. Nevertheless, they are still far from what they should be.

I call on all the States gathered here to examine how they too can contribute to promoting a more balanced and constructive United Nations approach to Israel. The United Nations cannot be true to its own lofty and universal principles, if it continues to waste scarce resources and serve as a forum of hostility and prejudice against one of its own.

The United Nations was born of the noble vision to bring the ideals of peace, security and human rights to all peoples. Sadly, reality of the United Nations remains far removed from the United Nations ideal. Major reform is urgent and crucial. Israel joins our fellow Member States and their peoples in the desire to see the United Nations fulfil the vision of its founders; to see the United Nations serving as a force for good in meeting the many challenges of our age.

Israel seeks to take its rightful place as a country with full and equal rights in this institution. We seek to realize our full potential to contribute to the global agenda. This is why I have decided to present for the first time Israel's candidacy for membership on the Security Council.

It was the wisest leader of ancient Israel, King Solomon, who wrote, in the book of Ecclesiastes, "For everything there is a season: a time to weep and a time to laugh; ... a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace." This is a time for peace. A time for the leaders of the world to work together to bring the blessings of opportunity, peace and prosperity to all humanity.

As the Jewish New Year dawns upon us, I extend on behalf of the Jewish people greetings of peace and brotherhood to our Muslim and Arab neighbours and to all nations.

The President returned to the Chair.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): A few days ago, this Hall was the venue of an unprecedented landmark, a historic gathering of a large number of heads of State or Government who converged to review and assess implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, to renew their commitment to the United Nations and the principles of its Charter and to underline their faith

and conviction in the valuable contribution of the international Organization which, by promoting the principles of peace, security and prosperity, is building a better world — a world free of the problems and challenges currently afflicting the international community and forming a threat to world peace and security. Those problems and challenges include terrorism, poverty, hunger, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the spread of contagious diseases, environmental degradation and the persistent and flagrant violation of human rights. The international gathering was an acknowledgement that multilateralism is the only viable option for addressing those issues and challenges, whose implications and dangers transcend geographical borders. Therefore, because of their nature, no country can confront them alone.

Although Kuwait welcomes the adoption of the outcome document (resolution 60/1) of the High-level Plenary Meeting, we express our disappointment that it did not include the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. We hope that the international community will reach a consensus regarding the importance of full and non-selective implementation of all disarmament treaties, particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, whose three main pillars are nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The international community must redouble its efforts to totally eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. We hope that the commitments and obligations agreed upon will be duly implemented.

Kuwait, for its part, will fulfil its obligations and comply with all relevant international conventions, treaties and United Nations resolutions. We hope that the next few years will see significant strides in the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and that our joint efforts will result in the streamlining of international cooperation and coordination mechanisms.

In that context, Kuwait wishes to commend the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts and initiatives to reform the Secretariat with a view to enhancing its accountability and transparency and improving the performance of United Nations staff in order to meet the demands of the constantly changing international environment. Kuwait is actively participating in the ongoing consultations on the reform of United Nations organs such as the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

We hope that a consensus will eventually be reached on Security Council reform that will achieve our common goal: improving the Council's role and effectiveness, so that it can fulfil its Charter mandate, which is the maintenance of international peace and security. Council reform should also ensure broader representation of regional groups, including in particular Arab and Islamic representation, which would make Council resolutions more transparent and effective.

The phenomenon of terrorism has become a direct and immediate threat to international peace and security. Its dangers have spread to affect many countries throughout the world. The 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States of America, the events currently unfolding in Iraq and the recent bombings in London and Sharm el-Sheikh have provided indisputable proof that terrorism neither is associated with, nor specifically targets, a particular race, religion or culture. Therefore, the responsibility for combating terrorism is collective and must be shouldered by all Member States without exception.

While the State of Kuwait reaffirms its principled position rejecting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, we wish to emphasize the need to combat terrorism within a framework of international legitimacy that recognizes the legitimate rights of peoples and brings about justice and stability. We also stress the importance of commitment and adherence by Member States to the 12 international conventions on terrorism, as well as to the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which Kuwait signed last Friday. We believe that that is the ideal way to eliminate this phenomenon, to curb its effects and to tackle its root causes.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait reaffirms its support for the proposal put forward by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of the fraternal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to establish an international centre to fight terrorism. We believe that such a centre would put in place an effective mechanism for collecting and exchanging information on this phenomenon.

Iraq continues to find itself in a critically difficult situation of instability and insecurity because of the almost daily terrorist attacks mounted by terrorist groups, including the vanquished fleeing remnants loyal to the former Iraqi regime. Those terrorist attacks

largely impede the efforts of the Iraqi Government to rebuild in the wake of the devastation left by the former regime as a result of its hostile policies towards its own people and neighbouring countries.

The State of Kuwait continues to lend support to our brothers in Iraq with a view to rehabilitating and rebuilding their country. Our approach stems from our belief that stability in Iraq is ultimately in the interest of stability in this vital region of the world and would have positive implications for its security and progress. We are fully confident that the fraternal people of Iraq will eventually overcome this difficult period in their history and that they will persist in building democratic institutions, in adopting the text of their new constitution and in laying the ground for the forthcoming legislative elections.

In the same vein, we wish to stress Kuwait's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and political independence of Iraq. The State of Kuwait looks forward to establishing solid fraternal relations with the new Iraq on the basis of mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and adherence to bilateral agreements, to the relevant United Nations resolutions and to the resolutions of international legitimacy, as they constitute the fundamental pillars of the new and future relationship between the two brotherly countries.

Furthermore, we welcome the Iraqi Government's determination to try the leaders of the former regime for all the crimes against humanity that they have committed against the people of Iraq. The trials should also cover the crimes committed against the Kuwaiti people, including the invasion of the State of Kuwait and the killing of Kuwaiti prisoners and third-country nationals.

Kuwait reaffirms its full support for the struggle of the Palestinian people to attain all their legitimate political rights. Kuwait demands that Israel move forward in fulfilling all its commitments and obligations under the relevant United Nations resolutions, primarily Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 1515 (2003), in accordance with the principle of land for peace and the provisions of the Arab peace initiative, the bilateral accords it signed with the Palestinian Authority within the framework of the peace process, and the road map, with all its provisions and obligations. Israel must also end its policy of oppressing the Palestinian people, dismantle the separation wall and release all Palestinian detainees.

The State of Kuwait views the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip as a first step to be followed by additional measures to be taken by Israel to end the occupation, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and in preparation for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State on Palestinian national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Kuwait hopes that the Israeli withdrawal will lead to the resumption of peace efforts in the region to ensure full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Arab Golan to the borderline of 4 June 1967 and its withdrawal from the rest of the Arab territory in southern Lebanon. Thereafter, a settlement should be reached through negotiations among all parties concerned to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region — a peace that would be enhanced by making the Middle East region, including the Gulf region, a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

In view of Kuwait's keen interest in the maintenance of security and stability in the Gulf region and given our close ties with the brotherly United Arab Emirates and with the friendly Islamic Republic of Iran, we support the position of the member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council regarding the three islands of the United Arab Emirates. It is our hope that the two countries will agree on a negotiation mechanism to resolve their dispute over the three islands, in accordance with the principles and norms of international law and good neighbourly relations.

It is our sincere hope that the resolutions on the promotion of sustainable development adopted at numerous international meetings and conferences convened by the United Nations and other organizations, as well as those goals in the High-level Plenary Meeting's outcome document, will lay the groundwork for a new partnership between the developed and the developing nations, thus contributing to the stability and the growth of economic relations among those States. We also hope that those resolutions will help create a balanced and fair international trading system in which each party assumes its responsibilities.

To create that kind of partnership, the economic structures of the developing countries need to be strengthened and the developed countries should fulfil

their pledges to provide financial and technical assistance and alleviate and cancel the debts of the poorest countries. They should also remove trade restrictions and tariffs on products made in poor countries and give those countries access to technology, enabling them to fully participate in the new economic system. All these measures would help put their peoples on the right track to development and prosperity.

In that context, the State of Kuwait is proud to have honoured all its international obligations. It will continue to support economic development programmes in developing countries through the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development. For the record, the Fund has so far extended $12 billion in development assistance to more than 100 countries in various regions of the world. Kuwait will also strive to ensure the stability of global oil markets, with a view to maintaining the pace of development and economic growth for all.

As we observe the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, Kuwait remains hopeful, confident and optimistic about the role of the United Nations and its capability to deal with international issues that pose a threat to world peace and security.

To that noble end, the international community must rally behind the United Nations and forge ahead at an even faster pace. We look forward to sincere and meaningful cooperation and partnership to tackle the current challenges. Furthermore, we must strive to create a future characterized by the values and ideals of freedom, justice and equality which, together, underpin security and stability across the world.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Bedjaoui, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Algeria.

Mr. Bedjaoui (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): At this crucial moment, when it is debating questions vital to the United Nations and all humanity, the General Assembly has unanimously decided to elect you, Mr. President, to preside over the deliberations of its sixtieth session. I therefore congratulate you very warmly and offer you my best wishes for success. I also congratulate your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, and thank the Secretary-General for his efforts for peace, development and agreement among nations.

Our world has been radically transformed since the end of the cold war — that sombre period that still has continuing effects. New threats have appeared, while other, older ones remain. New kinds of challenges loom, even as the international community is falling behind in finding appropriate responses to existing challenges, which are getting worse. New conflicts are erupting violently today, while the international community still struggles with the flashpoints that appeared following the Second World War, as well as those that arose out of the ensuing process of decolonization.

Humanitarian disasters, whether man-made or natural, and the problems of refugees, famine, the AIDS pandemic and malaria, exacerbated by persistent underdevelopment have contributed more than ever to stretch beyond strictly military issues our definition of collective security, which our Organization, since its birth, has been asked to promote. The mission to protect remains today an unattainable goal.

A vital threat seen daily throughout the world is the growing threat of international terrorism, which respects no borders and violates the most fundamental human rights. It is not enough to vigorously denounce the killing of innocent victims. To combat terrorism, we must oppose it with relentless determination. In that context, there is no alternative to resolute international cooperation that recognizes, above all, that an effective response to transnational terrorism is necessarily a collective effort.

Algeria believes it urgent to implement existing agreements on the fight against terrorism and to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism that can overcome the difficulties in reaching an agreed definition of terrorism while not providing pretexts for the oppression of peoples seeking to realize their legitimate rights. Active cooperation has been long awaited, but it is not sufficient.

Bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation must be expanded and improved as we strengthen international legal instruments, such as the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted last April.

At the same time, given the justifiable revulsion terrorism provokes, we must guard against attributing such acts to any religion or civilization. On the contrary, we must emphasize that the aspiration to peace and the search for agreement and exchange

among peoples are values common to the various civilizations we represent. That leads us to express our complete rejection of terrorism and spurs our collective reaction against it.

We cannot hide our concern at growing intolerance and the echoes we sometimes hear of pseudo-theories and false analyses that show ever less restraint in directly blaming Islam, which, for the overwhelming majority of a billion believers, is a religion that calls for fraternity, solidarity and tolerance. To blame Islam — as some small but influential groups do — is to forget that before terrorism was recognized as an international phenomenon, it also struck, in particular, at Muslims who had rejected the perpetrators and denied their claims that they represented all Muslims.

I strongly reaffirm that those criminals have placed themselves outside Islam and have no claim to it. I say this on behalf of a country that has suffered a decade of terrorism and which has found precisely in its religion the endurance and the will to triumph over barbarism, staunch its wounds, renew its hope and take the path of reconciliation and brotherhood, which are at the very heart of the community of people and its leaders, as we approach the national referendum of 29 September.

Although the situation today confirms some of our earlier doubts and concerns, our only concern now is to see the people of Iraq — the heirs to an ancient civilization that is admired by the whole world — return to peace and stability through the recovery of its full and complete sovereignty over a territory whose integrity is best preserved by exorcising the divisive demons generated by the present circumstances.

The Arab world is today the site of promising developments for the development of democracy and economic prosperity for its people. It would be wrong to see in these developments merely a response to external pressure. First and foremost, it comes from peoples wishing to participate, finally and actively, in their future, and who are eager to make their specific contribution to the conduct of affairs in a world where nothing that happens should be alien to them.

This desire for reform brought the Arab heads of State together in Algiers, last March for a summit meeting, over which we were honoured to preside. Reaffirming that desire, the leaders made firm commitments and we have proceeded to implement them.

As diverse as the Arab countries may be in their political, economic and social realities, we still have the same aspiration, which is bearing us towards a future of peace and progress to be shared by all if possible. In other words, we are fully aware that no peace and no sustainable economic momentum can be built in the Middle East unless the Palestinian people recover their full and complete sovereignty in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, capital of their independent State.

It is a positive thing that the risks of nuclear proliferation have received heightened international attention in the last few years. The seventh Conference to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty held last May should have provided us with a special occasion to develop and adopt appropriate measures to deal with the problem on a consensual basis. However, we must note that our expectation was not met, particularly with respect to the 13 measures on nuclear disarmament agreed to at the preceding Conference. Algeria, which has adopted and supported the Additional Protocol on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards regime, also fully supports total and complete disarmament, as well as the total elimination of weapons of mass destruction. But we cannot conceal our concern that an exception to the treaty that has been tolerated, even allowed, in a region as riven by conflict as the Middle East only further underscores the discriminatory approach that prevails with respect to non-proliferation.

The African landscape has been profoundly transformed since the formation of the African Union and the launching of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). So it is with new energy that Africa, having established its Peace and Security Council, has decided to tackle the conflicts that afflict it and to take up the resolute promotion of their final settlement. Anyone who looks at Africa objectively cannot ignore the endemic diseases, all of the visible and latent crises, the natural and man-made disasters, the famine and illiteracy. But today's Africa, we must note, has never had so many democratically elected regimes and so many economies undergoing promising reforms. Much still needs to be done, and the African countries are the first to recognize that.

Out of a sense of solidarity and also out of self-interest, developed countries should accompany Africa in its determination to make a radical change in its circumstances so as to allow the African continent to

become part of the world economy, gain prosperity and make its contribution to the prosperity of the world in general. This cannot be done unless we take specific actions that have been amply identified by NEPAD, by the Commission for Africa established by Tony Blair and by the report of the Secretary-General of our Organization.

As you know, the main points are to erase the debt and raise official development assistance (ODA) from the current $25 billion to $50 billion and then to $75 billion between now and 2010, to establish an international finance facility and to raise ODA from the developed countries to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product by 2015.

It is also in Africa, near Algeria, that we still see one of the last remaining uncompleted processes of decolonization. I am referring to the conflict in the Western Sahara, where Morocco and the Polisario Front are adversaries. The United Nations has identified this territory as being non-autonomous, and it is a situation that is actionable under the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. There is a peace plan that has been approved unanimously by the Security Council, calling for a framework and modalities for a final settlement through a free consultation of the Saharawi people regarding their destiny.

My country believes that the Baker Plan is the only framework able to lead to a settlement of the conflict, which pits Moroccans against the Polisario. Algeria fully supports the efforts of the United Nations to this end. We are pleased in this respect to see Mr. Peter van Walsum appointed as Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General and we assure him of our support in his mission, just as we do the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Western Sahara.

Resolving the conflict in the Western Sahara in keeping with norms of international legality and within the framework of the United Nations would have the positive effect of giving critical momentum to the building of the Greater Arab Maghreb, which Algeria has always called for.

We can only agree with the Secretary-General when he puts development at the centre of his concept of a new international economic order and gives it priority attention within the United Nations agenda. A few days ago, Member States evaluated progress made since the September 2000 adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and we must admit that the results are not that encouraging, the case of Africa being rather instructive. With regard to the implementation of the eight goals of the 2000 Declaration, we would say that some of them, such as poverty reduction, have been deferred to a dangerously remote future.

The requirement of adapting to new international realities makes reform an obligation for our Organization. Such reform must be thoroughgoing and balanced and serve and preserve the interests of as many as possible. We cannot just have specific amendments for the ambitions of a small number of Members, legitimate though those ambitions may be. The reforms to be undertaken must, above all, satisfy the majority and serve the collective interests and common aspirations of all.

The special attention given to the expansion of the Security Council is certainly justified, given the dominant role played by the Council in maintaining international peace and security, but we must not let this cause us to lose sight of the legitimate demands of Africa, nor of the need to maintain balance among the various bodies. Given the fact that most of the African countries were excluded from the Conference for the United Nations at San Francisco because they were colonies, it would be paradoxical, anachronistic and ineffective if developing countries were now invited to validate reform proposals that ignore their interests and concerns.

In this exercise that we are undertaking under the watchful eye of our peoples, let us work together and embrace a common vision that will ensure a future of peace and prosperity shared by the Member States that the United Nations has the duty to guarantee.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos Cuyaubé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain.

Mr. Moratinos Cuyaubé (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sixty years ago at San Francisco, the United Nations Charter was adopted. It was an event that set the path for the future of nations and peoples. It was an event at which intelligence was resolutely dedicated to peace and justice, and willpower was used for the common interest.

With the adoption of the outcome document by the High-level Plenary Meeting, a process of

paramount importance has been set in motion, one in which you, Sir, can count on the full support of the delegation of Spain. I wish to pay tribute to the sustained effort of your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, and to reiterate to our Secretary-General my admiration for his personal and diplomatic skills.

There can be no doubt that the United Nations has taken a step forward as a result of the High-level Plenary Meeting. We have achieved progress in essential areas. Spain is satisfied with the outcome because we have stressed the importance of assisting victims of terrorism. The Alliance of Civilizations initiative has been well received. The summit recalled the need to continue assisting middle-income countries and supported the search for new sources of financing for implementation of the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative.

I would like to mention here that an initiative on United Nations reform was unanimously adopted by the Spanish Parliament on 13 September 2005, urging the Government to achieve a number of objectives that are now reflected in the outcome document of the recent High-level Meeting. We recognized in that document that development, peace and security and human rights constitute the three basic interdependent and interrelated pillars of the United Nations system and are the foundation for our collective security and well-being. In our globalized world, we can solve international problems, and deal with new challenges and risks only through concerted action based on solidarity.

Among those collective actions, the fight against terrorism is an absolute priority for Spain. The General Assembly should adopt a global strategy that includes the goal of creating an international fund for victims. Spain has just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, and in the Sixth Committee Spain is determined to promote the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism before the end of this sixtieth General Assembly.

The summit concluded that tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation amongst different cultures, civilizations and peoples are essential elements for the promotion of international peace and security. This is precisely the conviction that inspired the President of the Government of Spain to propose the Alliance of Civilizations initiative at the previous General Assembly. The Secretary-General's High-level Group to guide the initiative will hold its first meeting in my country this autumn. This initiative, co-sponsored by the President of the Government of Spain and the Prime Minister of Turkey, is more necessary today than ever. It is imperative to put an end to the negative drift in mutual perceptions that is being fomented and used by extremist groups.

It is also urgent to find innovative and additional sources of financing for development. For that reason, Spain, along with five other countries, is promoting the Action against Hunger and Poverty initiative with the aim of identifying innovative and additional sources of financing for development. In this regard, Spain actively participates in the cancellation of debt to benefit the heavily indebted poor countries and is preparing a plan to swap debt for public investment in key human development areas in Latin America.

Let me reiterate Spain's firm commitment to peacekeeping operations, which translates into substantial contributions of our armed and security forces wherever needed, especially in the Balkans, Haiti and Afghanistan. I would like to underline the high degree of commitment and professionalism shown by Spanish peacekeeping forces and recall with pride those who have sacrificed their lives for international peace and security. The creation of a Peacebuilding Commission is another outstanding achievement of this summit. Spain, as an important contributor to the United Nations budget and to its peacekeeping operations, is ready to participate actively in the work of this commission.

Since its inception this Organization has been determined to provide the international community with a binding legal framework for the protection and promotion of human rights. Spain shares this goal. We have strengthened our cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we have increased our contribution to its budget. We are also pleased with the establishment of a Human Rights Council and are fully prepared to contribute actively to the work of this new council. Over the past year, important legislative developments have occurred in my country, and we have taken significant steps to promote real equality among citizens in areas such as gender violence and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The Government has also tackled the situation of immigrant workers through the

implementation of a broad-ranging legalization process.

We firmly support the reform process aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of the United Nations, which will ensure the concrete implementation of its resolutions. It is of little use to improve existing structures, if there is no enforcement of compliance with decisions. The United Nations must regain its credibility. We believe that the reform, especially that of the Security Council, must be the result of a broad agreement among all of us.

I agree with the Secretary-General that our greatest failure has to do with non-proliferation and disarmament. For Spain, nuclear proliferation represents a serious risk for international peace and security. We are concerned about the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, and we support the preparation of an international arms trade treaty.

I cannot but mention here, once again this year, the question of Gibraltar and the need to put an end to this dispute through the implementation of the repeated mandates of the General Assembly that have urged Spain and the United Kingdom to continue their bilateral negotiations, with a view to reaching a definitive solution to the decolonization process, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. Spain is willing to work in a constructive spirit; this spirit is reflected in the creation of a trilateral dialogue forum, the aim of which is to produce an atmosphere of mutual trust and cooperation for the benefit and prosperity of Gibraltar and the region as a whole.

Next month, Spain will host the fifteenth Ibero-American Summit in Salamanca. It will be a meeting that will constitute a turning point in the creation of a true Ibero-American forum, with the institutionalization of its secretariat and the manifestation of a stronger will to contribute to effective multilateralism.

Spain pays particular attention to its relations with its neighbours in the Maghreb region. Through an active and comprehensive policy, Spain wishes to reinforce its cooperation with those countries, firmly supporting political stability, respect for human rights and those reforms that are put in place to consolidate the rule of law and economic and social development.

In this regard, Spain firmly believes that the Western Sahara conflict, which has lasted for almost 30 years, requires priority attention. The international community must contribute to overcome the stalemate and offer, within the framework of the United Nations, a just and definitive political solution, in accordance with international law. To that end, Spain is developing an active diplomacy and believes that steps taken, such as the recent appointments by the Secretary-General of his Personal Envoy and of the Special Representative for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, will provide the opportunity to relaunch the process.

In the Middle East, the disengagement from Gaza, carried out with great skill and with great effectiveness by the Israeli Government, may constitute a powerful driving force in the peace process. It is only right to congratulate the Government of Israel for its decision. I also extend my congratulations to the Palestinian National Authority for having significantly contributed to the entire operation, so that it was completed in a peaceful manner. Now that the disengagement has been satisfactorily completed, the road map must again become the central framework for the peace process.

Moreover, the time has come to increase our aid to Africa and to support African countries in their efforts aimed at integration, peace and progress.

The summit outcome document is a good starting point to continue working towards achieving the agreements that still elude us. We cannot allow inaction, lack of ambition or shortsightedness to prevent the successful conclusion of the task ahead. Sixty years ago the signatories of the United Nations Charter translated into an agreement a thought that was as solid as it was simple: we can either walk together towards peace, or we will never find it. A year ago, before this Assembly, the President of the Spanish Government recalled that the history of humanity does not give us many reasons to be optimistic. Let us work with imagination and commitment to turn this Organization into an expression of common will, an Organization legitimized by its effectiveness and its universal character. Let us work so that some day we will feel proud as human beings. We are the United Nations, and the people of the world expect us to act as such in the face of the challenges and opportunities afforded to us in these times of change.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Mrs. Calmy-Rey (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Eliasson, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to assure you of my country's full support during this sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Reform will be a central theme at the Assembly's sixtieth session. Allow me to focus on four institutional reforms, by which Switzerland sets great store. They are, first of all, the creation of a Human Rights Council; secondly, reform of the Security Council; thirdly, the Peacebuilding Commission; and, fourthly, internal management of the United Nations.

The creation of a Human Rights Council is crucial. The Commission on Human Rights in its present form suffers from various defects. We deplore its weak capacity to respond to grave human rights violations. We also regret its overly selective character and the application of double standards, which undermine its authority.

Switzerland welcomes the decision made by the Member States at the summit to replace the Commission on Human Rights with a Human Rights Council. However, we regret that it has not been possible, even at this stage, to establish some of the working methods on which there was wide agreement.

For Switzerland, this Human Rights Council should be a principal organ of the United Nations or should at least be directly subordinate to the General Assembly. It should convene periodically, be based in Geneva and should work in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It should be of a size that guarantees both its legitimacy and the capacity to work effectively. Finally, to ensure real added value, it should incorporate those instruments that constitute the strength of the present Commission without reproducing its defects.

The profile and working methods of the Human Rights Council should be established promptly. We have given ourselves until the end of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly to do this, but the ideal solution would be to complete the work before the next session of the Commission on Human Rights, which starts next March.

We now need a clearer picture of the process which the President of the General Assembly intends to conduct. We assure him of our strong support in this task. Switzerland hopes that the future Human Rights Council can start its work soon, and it invites all States to strive towards this goal.

Switzerland has also been actively involved in the reform of the Security Council, an organ that embodies both the strengths and the weaknesses of the United Nations. No one can deny that the composition of the Security Council should better reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. Enlargement of the Security Council will make it more representative and will strengthen the authority of its decisions. However, enlargement of the Security Council, which has been the subject of intensive debate over the past few months, is only one aspect of the reform that needs to be made. It should not overshadow another indispensable part of the reform: the need to improve the Council's working methods.

For most countries, opportunities to sit on the Security Council are few and limited in time. A serious reform of the Council's working methods would have an immediate and beneficial effect for all Member States. New and more detailed rules should be adopted in a General Assembly resolution and then written into the Security Council's rules of procedure.

Reform of the Security Council's working methods must achieve several goals: it should increase the possibilities for participation by States that are not members of the Council; it should ensure greater accountability of the Council to all the Member States of the United Nations; and, finally, it should improve transparency and find new ways for the Council to hear other points of view.

Efficiency is a fourth criterion that needs to be taken into account. Improvements in the working methods of the Security Council must be geared towards strengthening its capacity to efficiently exercise its responsibilities for international peacekeeping and security.

In May Switzerland presented a series of specific recommendations that were well received by many Member States. I would like to focus on three specific proposals.

First, in accordance with the principle of the responsibility to protect, the right of veto must not be

exercised in cases of genocide, ethnic cleansing or other grave and large-scale violations of international humanitarian law or human rights. I believe that that principle is sufficiently clear not to require further elaboration.

Secondly, the Security Council should refrain, as far as possible, from exercising legislative functions. The task of codifying and developing international law should remain the primary responsibility of the General Assembly, which includes all Member States. The Council is authorized by the United Nations Charter to take emergency measures to maintain international peace and security. However, that authorization cannot be interpreted as including the power to impose legislative obligations, that is, obligations that are general in scope, abstract and have no time limits.

Thirdly, on the subject of Security Council sanctions, the procedures for establishing and revising the lists of targeted individuals and entities must be improved. It is unacceptable that people who are subject to sanctions that affect their basic rights are denied all right of appeal. In particular, it is important to ensure the right to be heard, which is a fundamental human right.

Switzerland, together with other countries, intends to present a draft resolution on improving the working methods of the Security Council.

Another important institutional reform decided at the summit is the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. Switzerland has contributed its ideas to that project over the past few months. It welcomes the creation of that body, which will address a key area of United Nations activities and fill a clear institutional gap.

Once a conflict has ended, the main players — institutions, States and civil society — must work together to rebuild the country. The principal mission of the Peacebuilding Commission will be to bring those players from the fields of peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and development together to define joint strategies for future action.

The Commission will include representatives of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as representatives of the principal financial donors and troop contributors. Switzerland believes that the main United Nations institutions concerned should also take part in the deliberations. For instance, it would be useful to include the Chairman of the United Nations Development Group, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It would also be useful to bring on board, as needed, experts from civil society, the academic world or the private sector.

Furthermore, in the composition of the Commission, we need to ensure gender parity.

Peacekeeping, humanitarian action and development are parallel activities and should not be rigidly divided into successive phases. In drafting its mandate, we should ensure that the Commission has the ability to advise all the institutional actors concerned at any step of the peace and reconstruction process.

We cannot speak of improving the efficiency of the Security Council without discussing the improvements that have to be made in the internal management of the United Nations. The Summit Outcome document sets out the most urgently needed measures. They must be implemented without delay.

In that context, the three following factors must be taken into account: first, the political competence and responsibility to decide the budget belong to the General Assembly; secondly, the Secretary-General's management authority must be extended; and, thirdly, the internal oversight bodies must be strengthened.

The scandals that have tarnished the image of the United Nations in recent months underscore the urgent need to strengthen the means as well as the financial and operational independence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Furthermore, given the increasing complexity of their task, we must strengthen cooperation between the various oversight bodies, which are spread across the United Nations system. We invite the Member States to support the enlargement of the mandate of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, so that it is able to respond to requests for assistance from the specialized agencies.

Especially close to my heart is the importance of combating cases of abuse and sexual exploitation committed in the context of United Nations peace operations. Such abuses are a grave violation of human rights and of the values that the Organization espouses. They damage the credibility of the Organization and hinder the accomplishment of its missions on the

ground. Switzerland advocates zero tolerance on this question. We strongly support the measures that have recently been taken, in particular an increase in the number of resident investigators deployed on the ground under the authority of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

Last autumn, we embarked together on a major undertaking: adapting the multilateral system so that it can address the new problems and challenges of the twenty-first century, with a strengthened and more efficient United Nations at its centre. All reform requires a subtle mix of ambition, realism and patience. We have come part of the way. The basic itinerary was set at the summit. We must now pursue the path of reform, give shape to our early decisions, and resolve persisting differences. That has to be one of the main objectives of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, which has just begun.

The President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Aïchatou Mindaoudou, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and African Integration of the Niger.

Mrs. Mindaoudou (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I am very pleased, Mr. President, on behalf of the delegation of the Niger, to express our warmest congratulations on your election to the presidency of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. In electing you, we recognize your outstanding qualities as a diplomat and as an active player on the ground — qualities that augur well for the success of the present session. Rest assured, Sir, that you will have the full support of my delegation. We wish you every success in accomplishing your task.

To your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jean Ping, I wish to express our appreciation and our gratitude for the wisdom, skill and insight with which he guided the work of our previous session and prepared for the High-level Plenary Meeting.

To Secretary-General Kofi Annan, I wish to pay a well-deserved tribute for the decisive role he has played at the head of our Organization. We pledge our unswerving support for his efforts to reform the United Nations system and adapt it to the concerns of today.

Need we recall the historic nature of our session? It is taking place exactly 10 years after the Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the Programme of Action was adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. The Secretary-General, in his important report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (*A/59/2005*), made a comprehensive diagnosis of the multiform and interdependent threats and challenges facing the world and, at the same time, made interesting recommendations to deal with them. Equally historic is the outcome document (*resolution 60/1*) of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which we just adopted. It is a source of great hope in our arduous efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Among those threats and challenges, to which I shall refer again presently, are terrorism, the inequalities of the international economic and trade system, and violations of human rights.

Terrorism continues to rage throughout the world, seriously threatening international peace and security. The recent attacks in London and Sharm el-Sheikh attest eloquently to that fact. The fight against this scourge must therefore be strengthened and carried out over the long term, but within the framework of international law. In that regard, we believe it is crucial to accelerate the process of elaborating an international convention to fight terrorism. Such a convention should define the concept clearly to avoid ambiguity.

Moreover, the fight against terrorism cannot be effective and fruitful without appropriate international cooperation. It is because of such cooperation — which has enabled us to strengthen the capacities of our defence and security forces — that my country has recently had considerable success in combating this phenomenon.

Peace and security also require the adoption of effective measures against the proliferation of weapons in general. Here, I welcome the initiative of the Economic Community of West African States — which the Niger currently chairs — aimed at establishing a legally binding instrument: its moratorium on the manufacture, import and export of weapons. That approach has led us to regret the failure at the most recent review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Today, international peace and security are being sorely tested by a steadily rising number of conflicts, some of which seem to be endless quagmires because of their persistence and recurrence. In West Africa, although some hotbeds of tension are in the process of being defused — such as in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau — the subregion is still not completely

free of insecurity and instability. We hope for positive developments in Côte d'Ivoire that will permit a swift return to normalcy in that country, formerly a harbour of peace and prosperity.

In Western Sahara, the Niger reaffirms its support for the Secretary-General's efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement of the conflict in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

In Burundi, we welcome the positive outcome of the peace process culminating in the legislative and presidential elections.

Peace must not only be re-established and maintained; it must also be consolidated. In that regard, the Secretary-General's proposal concerning the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission is of capital importance, in that it will enable many countries emerging from conflict to break the vicious circle of violence and devastation.

Concerning the Middle East, my country wishes to reaffirm once again that settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict necessarily depends upon the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the creation of an independent, sovereign and viable State. In that regard, Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip is a positive step that, we hope, will permit the resumption of negotiations within the framework of the road map.

With regard to Jammu and Kashmir, we remain convinced that the relevant United Nations resolutions must be implemented to enable the Kashmiri people to exercise their right to self-determination. That should further reduce the tensions between India and Pakistan. The Niger, a member of the contact group of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on that issue, encourages the two parties to move forward in their talks aimed at a definitive settlement of this problem.

This year, as we assess the progress made in honouring the commitments made at the Millennium Summit, the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting, which we just adopted, once again emphasizes the interdependence of States and highlights the need for increased solidarity. To that end, solidarity and international cooperation must, more than ever before, go beyond professions of faith if they are to be more effective. In any event, solidarity must no longer be infinitely variable, as is unfortunately the case today.

The Niger, recently the victim of an acute food crisis, would like international solidarity to be rethought so that we can invest in the future by implementing lasting solutions that will ensure permanent food security for our people. Without a rethought solidarity, many African countries, including mine, may unfortunately never be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. That would require an increase in official development assistance, from both a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. In that regard, we welcome the decision of those developed countries that have elaborated a timetable enabling them to achieve the set objective of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product by 2015. A rethought solidarity would also require the establishment of innovative financing sources that would not place an excessive burden on developing countries.

We welcome the recent decisions taken by partners, particularly the Group of Eight and the European Union. We urge the international community and the United Nations to further strengthen their cooperation with the New Partnership for Africa's Development and with new initiatives for Africa, including the Blair Commission's International Finance Facility, President Bush's Millennium Challenge Account and the Chirac-Lula initiative.

With regard to international trade, we hope that the multilateral negotiations under way will lead to mutually advantageous results by 2006, as planned. However, in the interest of mutual and shared development, there must be an end to all agricultural subsidies on exports. In that regard, the Hong Kong Ministerial Conference planned for December is a crucial event for us that, once again, should be attended with this rethought solidarity in mind, particularly with regard to the poorest countries.

Concerning institutional reform of the United Nations, my country wishes to pay tribute to the far-sightedness of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in identifying the stakes of such reform and in making his interesting and important recommendations.

The Niger is fully committed to the role played by Africa in the international arena. That collective commitment has led us to forge a common position on United Nations reform, which my country wholeheartedly supports. In fact, our continent, whose importance is more apparent every day, must pursue

with determination and in unity its fight for the democratization of international relations.

The United Nations is the only world body with the mandate of addressing issues of security, development and human rights. To be equal to that immense and delicate mission, it must be fair, representative and democratic. It must also base its actions on multilateralism and consultation, particularly within the General Assembly.

The long-awaited reform of the Security Council must be pursued in transparency so that a renewed United Nations can be more democratic and more representative of today's world.

The Economic and Social Council, for its part, must be the forum for coordinating and drafting strategies so that the excellent opportunities created in this increasingly globalized world will also be accessible to the poorest countries.

The establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission has filled a significant void, because it constitutes a formerly non-existent link between security and development.

We welcome the creation of the Human Rights Council, based on the principles of universality and non-exclusion. These are the prerequisites for strengthening and improving our shared House.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Juli Minoves-Triquell, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Culture and Cooperation of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Minoves-Triquell (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; English translation provided by the delegation*): At the beginning of the third millennium, faster means of travel that began in the nineteenth century with railroad technology are today hurtling us around the globe at even faster speeds. Dramatic changes are taking place at all levels and in all modes of communication. From the train, to the automobile and to the airplane, even in space travel, speed is erasing spatial barriers. The telegraph, the telephone, the Internet, cell phones, video conferencing: speed is altering the way we communicate with one another.

In this new age, immensely significant developments can take place as more quickly than the mind can follow them. But as the philosopher Paul Virillio warns us, with every new technology comes the potential for a new accident and with increasing speed comes the threat of ever more horrendous catastrophes. Natural disasters have become magnified not only by increases in population, but by the growing dangers of environmental pollution.

Sixty years after the founding of the United Nations, we live in a faster world, where we have to be able to react to events almost immediately. We have to ensure that even with the feeling of heightened risk that we live with at the beginning of the twenty-first century — whether this be due to natural phenomena, advances in technology, the threat of terrorism or the frittering away of resources — our will to act is not in any way diminished. The bar is set very high, but our capacity to act together as a whole can be just as great.

Another period of technological innovation also affected dramatic changes in the speed and mode of communication — the printing press. Let us reflect for a moment about the effects of those changes and what we might learn from them. The printing press fostered a rapid exchange of information that was readily available to large numbers of people and could not be censored or controlled, although some institutions tried very hard to enact such controls. Out of this explosion of information came the glory of a scientific revolution but also the sixteenth-century wars of religion and Europe's first world war, the Thirty Years War of the first half of the seventeenth century. The promise of eventual mastery over the natural world was coupled with violent attempts to dominate the minds and souls of man.

In many ways, our own information revolution has had a similar effect on developments. On the one hand, we have reason to hope that the problems facing the world can be solved by technology; on the other hand, technology has contributed to the rise of extremism and provided the means to unleash violence of hitherto unknown proportions.

The radical enlightenment, which first began in the Netherlands, a small country but one known for its tolerance and liberty of creative thought, offered new solutions to the turmoil and sectarian violence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It developed a mode of critique that could be separated from religious truth, and, for the first time in the history of the West, a fully modern ethical system. What forms might a radical twenty-first century enlightenment take? I would rather hope that we will see a new sense of

human values, a recognition that we are united not only by our presence in a shrinking world but as members of the human race.

We are fully aware that even as this explosion in technology seems to link all countries in the embrace of a globalized media culture, it feeds old parochialisms, nationalism and ethnic strife. The gap between rich and poor, the have and have-not countries, seems ever wider, even as our interconnectedness grows in trade and in labour. But with visions of first-world excess beamed into every corner of the globe, can anyone be surprised that anger towards the West increases? Poverty, discrimination, war, hunger and disease — this is the daily lot for a great part of humanity. We see the images every day. We cannot ignore nor can we fear these realities. We have to face them with real development policies coupled with good governance and a just system for trade and dialogue. The Millennium Development Goals are our collective responsibility.

The legacy of the Renaissance nation State remains a powerful concept. Our love for our respective countries and all that this represents to us is a defining aspect of our identities. So how is it possible to overcome the fundamental paradox of this Organization — to link the pride of our national statehood, which is the source of our material, cultural and ethnic differences, to the idea of unity, of being "united".

In part, the answer seems to lie in the potential for rebalancing the global economy, but it also requires a reawakening of those dulled sensibilities that separate rich from poor, the advantaged from the disadvantaged, the free from the oppressed. The Millennium Declaration was a necessary step forward, and the current tensions over reform should not distract this body from its ultimate mission.

Whether we are speeding towards challenges that will take the form of natural or man-made catastrophes, we can be assured that their effects will no longer be contained within national borders. We must prepare to respond to them with a strength and resolve that also knows no bounds.

Before, I spoke of a small country, the Netherlands, and of its history. Andorra is also a small country that believes in tolerance and respect for our fellow man. Our stable relations with our neighbours, Andorra's tradition as a safe haven during European wars and conflicts, our parliamentary tradition that stretches back to 1419 and our geopolitical realities, all make us believe in and defend the virtues and values of dialogue, pacifism and development, which are at one with those of the United Nations.

In twelve years of international life, my country has adopted some 130 international conventions and has stated its firm belief in international law, as in the creation of the International Criminal Court. We will continue in this task, reaffirming our commitment to multilateralism, and by sending to Parliament for ratification the conventions on terrorism and human rights. We also give our support to the creation of a Council of Human Rights, and we will follow closely the progress made on a new convention in the struggle against terrorism.

The United Nations represents a legacy from a period of conflict which culminated in the Second World War, the Cold War, and the nuclear stalemate that followed. While we recognize its imperfections, we must not forget to acknowledge the wisdom of its guiding principles: peace between all nations, universal human rights, and the development of states.

We live in a time when the power of a single nation is fast becoming an historical illusion. Let us work towards a new enlightenment, the unity of the United Nations. It is time to work together for the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan.

Mr. Nazarov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The recently convened High-level Plenary Meeting at the level of heads of State or Government can rightly be referred to as the major historical event of the beginning of the new millennium. It is important that, at the summit, the international community not only reiterated previously undertaken commitments but also took new, concrete decisions for their practical implementation. Most importantly, world leaders clearly stated that there is no alternative to the United Nations as an international Organization that can coordinate efforts to address the challenges faced by humankind.

Through the common political will of world leaders, a unique opportunity has arisen to strengthen joint efforts towards peaceful and sustainable social

and economic development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); to progress towards the eradication of poverty and disease; to overcome humanitarian crises; and to provide a better world for present and future generations.

Further progress requires united, concerted and consistent action on the part of the international community as a whole. There is no doubt that the United Nations must play a key role in mobilizing and coordinating such efforts. We share the view that it is necessary to strengthen the Organization and its specialized agencies, including through the urgent reform of the Secretariat and of other United Nations bodies.

Tajikistan welcomes the outcome of the September summit and is prepared to meet all the commitments and implement all the decisions outlined in its outcome document. We view them as a pledge by the international community to devote the necessary attention to human development challenges and, to that end, to channel additional financial resources to countries in extreme need, such as Tajikistan.

The Millennium Development Goals must remain the focus of our efforts. There is no doubt that, at the national level, the pace of, and priorities in, the implementation of the MDGs must be adapted to the conditions prevailing in particular countries, each of which has its own way of doing things and its own particular characteristics.

Tajikistan aims to achieve maximum progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Despite the difficulties we face, we have made real progress towards attaining them. According to the World Bank, noticeable positive changes have occurred in the area of poverty reduction: in recent years the number of people living below the poverty line has decreased by 16 per cent.

It is clear that progress has been made in ensuring food security, which is among the key priorities in Tajikistan. The Government's objectives include the development of agriculture and the creation within it of a viable private sector, and, at a minimum, a threefold increase in the income of rural households.

We fully agree with the conclusions reached in the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment report submitted to the Secretary-General by a team of experts led by Jeffrey Sachs, which state that Tajikistan has a unique opportunity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, in the context of their major parameters, by 2015. Successful achievement of the envisaged targets will allow Tajikistan to become, in Central Asia, an example of an emerging democracy characterized by equality and prosperity.

Tajikistan is currently at a turning point in its development. The armed conflict was resolved within a short period of time, and the complex peacebuilding phase, which is being successfully implemented with United Nations support, is approaching its conclusion. Over the last five years, with the involvement of the United Nations Office in Tajikistan, the country has successfully travelled the difficult road of national reconciliation, enhancing its stability, establishing democratic institutions, promoting the rule of law and ensuring respect for human rights.

Stability and the implementation of first-generation reforms have brought about a speedy increase in gross domestic product, with an annual increase of 9.3 per cent over the past five years. The rehabilitation of the country's economy is progressing. At the same time, the Republic's authorities have a clear idea of the scale and complexity of the problems facing the country and are fully aware of their responsibilities in addressing social and economic problems, and they are undertaking every possible measure for their resolution.

Tajikistan is one the first countries in the world to have generated, with the assistance of the United Nations, an estimate of the overall costs and resources required for the implementation of the MDGs. The Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment identified the fundamental structural and institutional reforms needed in Tajikistan to create an enabling environment for achieving the MDGs; policy priorities in respective sectors; and financial schemes for funding the development of rural areas, the educational and health systems, the water supply and sanitation infrastructures, and the environment.

According to The Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment, Tajikistan will need about $13 billion over the next 10 years to achieve the required progress in the implementation of the MDGs.

However, the Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment is only the first concrete measure. Based on that document, a National Strategy for Development for 2006-2008 and a more detailed

Strategy for Poverty Reduction for 2006-2008 are currently being elaborated in Tajikistan. These measures, undertaken by the Government of Tajikistan, fully accord with the decisions of the summit on the elaboration of national strategies for development.

Tajikistan's social and economic development will depend largely on the international community's approach to addressing existing challenges, including poverty eradication; development financing; the creation of an equitable system of world trade; the alleviation of the consequences of natural disasters; and the resolution of demographic problems. That is why the summit's decisions on such a crucial issue as development financing are of pivotal importance for Tajikistan.

Allow me briefly to touch on some key issues.

I turn first to needs related to official assistance for development. In cooperation with United Nations experts, we assessed our needs in this area in a detailed and transparent manner. Currently, our financial requirements for sustainable development considerably exceed the available federal and external resources. Of the $930 million that international donors have committed to allocate to Tajikistan during the period 2003-2005, only 40 per cent has actually been provided. We call on the international community to double, at a minimum, existing aid for the implementation of the MDGs.

Reducing the burden of foreign debt is of special importance for us, since the funds released can be invested in development. Due to the efforts undertaken by the Government to reduce the burden of servicing foreign debt, some progress has been achieved in the restructuring of bilateral debts in recent years. However, in the near future, the debt burden will remain heavy. According to estimates, this year debt will equal more than 40 per cent of gross domestic product, and it will continue to pose a threat to the macro-economic stability of the country and to plans for development.

The economy and trade in Tajikistan depend to a large extent on favourable conditions in the world market. Tajikistan hopes for the successful completion of the Doha round of trade negotiations within the World Trade Organization, in order that it may fully realize its potential in the field of development and so that progress can be made towards an open and equitable system of world trade.

Lack of access to the sea and remoteness from world markets significantly increase transit transportation expenditures, make it harder for the country to participate in world trade and directly affect the poverty rate in the country. In that context, the promotion of regional cooperation, primarily with neighbouring countries, is a key factor for the achievement of the MDGs in Tajikistan.

Our region faces specific problems, given that the establishment of an environment conducive to developing trade relations and the promotion of economic relations as a whole depends, in many respects, on the success of the stabilization and peacebuilding processes in neighbouring Afghanistan. With respect to the country's post-conflict rehabilitation, it is clear that, at the regional level, active involvement by the States of Central Asia neighbouring Afghanistan in its development will be key to the success of the efforts undertaken there.

In this connection, Tajikistan believes that it is absolutely essential that Afghanistan share in the multifaceted process of regional cooperation. We expect our region's leading international partners to provide appropriate support for that process. Indeed, that issue could be considered by the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission.

Although we rely on international assistance, the Government of Tajikistan is making increased efforts to utilize the country's own capacity to the fullest extent. Tajikistan's water resources offer enormous advantages in terms of the implementation of the MDGs. Unfortunately, less than 5 per cent of their potential is currently being exploited.

Rational and fair management of water resources will contribute directly to progress towards the MDGs by helping to address challenges related to, inter alia, food security, employment, sanitation, the reduction of disease and increased school attendance. Our common goal is to develop a qualitatively new pattern of sustainable water resource management and to address water economy challenges at the national, regional and international levels by bringing together international community support and national efforts, while ensuring that the countries themselves and even subregions facing water supply problems play the leading role.

We expect all countries and all of the specialized agencies of the United Nations to take an active part in events relating to the International Decade for Action

"Water for Life", the success of which will depend on joint activities being undertaken. That should make a common, tangible contribution to the future of humankind.

As a country that has lived through civil conflict, Tajikistan considers progress in the implementation of the MDGs to be of special significance. The successful social and economic development of the country is the key to preventing a recurrence of such conflict. Our experience teaches us that creating conditions that can prevent the resumption of conflict and strengthen the process of advancing social and economic development in countries that have lived through such conflict must be among the key goals of the international community. In this connection, we fully share the conviction that the United Nations must focus on overcoming and preventing conflict and on post-conflict rehabilitation and development. We hope that the new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission will expand the capacity of the international community to respond to the needs of post-conflict countries and allow a direct link to be made between security and development. The Economic and Social Council is called upon to play its role in that process.

Tajikistan, which suffered in its struggle for independence, has resolutely set out on the democratic road towards development, and will not turn back. The international community, first and foremost the United Nations, has made an enormous contribution in that regard, and for many years we have benefited from its generous assistance and selfless support.

We are convinced that the United Nations should remain the key body for regulating international relations in the new millennium. We are working on the assumption that the consolidating function of the United Nations should be enhanced. The reform of the Organization should be rational, and the renewed United Nations itself should be strong and capable of responding to world events in a swift and proper manner so that it can effectively counteract the many global challenges and threats of a new generation. Tajikistan will make its own contribution in that area with a view to strengthening the United Nations and enhancing its role in the modern world.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Briz Abularach, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guatemala.

Mr. Briz Abularach (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a founding Member of the United Nations, Guatemala would like to reaffirm, before the General Assembly, its faith in and commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the sovereign equality of States and participatory, transparent and democratic multilateralism. The United Nations continues to be the best tool available to humanity in its endeavour to accomplish that goal.

The goals that the Charter signatories set for themselves six decades ago have lost none of their validity. Indeed, the attainment of those goals remains a major challenge for humanity. The goal of maintaining international peace and security presents new challenges. Its relationship with sustainable development and the fight against poverty serves as a paradigm in that regard. We are confronting new threats that make it harder to ensure good governance and undermine democracy, such as trafficking in persons, weapons and drugs, as well as terrorism. Small and vulnerable countries, such as mine, are particularly affected by those problems.

We have been trying together to cope with such new challenges for some time, but only recently have we been able to reflect on them and reach a number of agreements that we trust will enable us to reform the Organization with a view to address these challenges, as a whole, more efficiently and with renewed ambition.

We support the appeal made by Secretary-General at the beginning of the general debate for an "accountability pact" to ensure that the Secretariat and Governments are effectively held to account and monitored.

Guatemala will continue to participate actively in efforts to set up the Peacebuilding Commission. Our own national experience will enable us to contribute actively to those efforts.

We will also contribute to the effort to achieve the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism and to the implementation of an integral strategy aimed at the suppression of that scourge.

We attach equal importance to the creation of a standing Human Rights Council, the composition of which is to be agreed upon during this session, with a view to properly focusing, depoliticizing and making

more effective the discharge of our responsibility to ensure the full observance of human rights. We resolutely support the strengthening of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which should be provided with the resources necessary for it to carry out its work effectively. Similarly, we have no hesitation in supporting the responsibility to protect.

We consider it essential to make decisive progress in the areas of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation by means of initiatives such as that put forward by Norway, Australia, Chile, Indonesia, the United Kingdom, Romania and South Africa, which Guatemala supports.

As regards the principal organs, we support the strengthening and revitalization of the General Assembly, whose task is to provide political guidance in connection with the work of the Organization. We must restore to the Economic and Social Council its leading role in the area of sustainable development, and continue to enhance its cooperation with the Security Council.

We urge the broadest support by Member States for the reform of the Security Council. It is essential that that reform effort be comprehensive and that it include a review of the Council's methods of work and of the procedures by which decisions are taken, the purpose being to strengthen the Council and to make it more legitimate, ensuring that it reflects present-day realities and represents developing countries. We are sympathetic to the aspirations of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan to become permanent members of the Council, as well as to the call for additional representation for Africa.

When addressing the Assembly one year ago, Oscar Berger Perdomo, the President of Guatemala, sought to express the feelings of our country at that crucial time in its history. I am pleased on this occasion to share with the Assembly some of the advances we have made since then.

Not only were the Peace Agreements integrated into the Government plan, but the framework law on those Agreements was enacted. Social dialogue has been pursued in all areas of Government action. A 43 per cent reduction in the strength of the army was achieved, and there was progress in modernizing and professionalizing it. In line with this, the Guatemalan army has increased its participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations and is now in Haiti and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Public expenditure is concentrated in the social area and in infrastructure, for which 60 per cent of the 2006 national budget is earmarked. A secretariat for food and nutritional security has been created, while a State policy in those matters has been drawn up, with a participatory and sustainable focus. Significant activities are being carried out at the national level and jointly with other Central American countries to combat common crime and transnational organized crime. A programme for economic and social reactivation continues to be implemented with enthusiasm, a cadastral law was recently enacted and a competition policy, adopted by consensus with the participation of civil society, will be presented next week.

The fight against poverty and social exclusion continues to occupy a central position in all the activities of the Government and is carried out in a manner that fully respects the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. Recently, we established a national policy for indigenous peoples, which was presented by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Ambassador for the Guatemalan Peace Agreements, Rigoberta Menchu.

Appropriate legal proceedings continue to be taken against persons guilty of acts of corruption. Full transparency continues to be ensured in the area of Government procurement.

Our commitment to the full observance of human rights is being maintained at the national level. Inter-agency activities are being carried out under the recently adopted national human rights programme. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has established an office in Guatemala, the functions of which are to provide advice to the Government, State entities and civil society in order to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights in our nation.

Nevertheless, the advances made are increasingly being compromised by an inordinate increase in the price of fossil fuels, which has an extremely negative effect on countries whose open economies, like that of Guatemala, are net importers of oil. Our oil bill is absorbing an increasing percentage of the foreign exchange generated by exports of goods and services. At the same time, we have had to cope with considerable increases in the cost of transportation and

of electricity, with their multiplier effect on productive sectors and the price of basic consumer goods. The effects of all this at the level of the economy as a whole and at the macroeconomic level threaten to slow down the expansion of our economy. For our part, we are doing all we can to conserve energy and develop alternatives to hydrocarbons. We appeal to the international community to cooperate with us in mitigating the impact of this situation.

Guatemala is taking actions to strengthen democracy at the national level by consolidating a regime that is democratic, participatory and inclusive. Our commitment to democracy in the world is unshakeable. That is why we are participating actively in forums that seek to promote and defend those rights, and we also support the Democracy Fund.

My country's foreign policy has as its main objectives achieving better inclusion of Guatemala in the world, strengthening multilateralism and regional integration. We have strengthened our ties with countries and groups of countries with which we have relations and are united by institutionalized mechanisms of cooperation; moreover, we have established new strategic associations with countries and groups of countries in South America, the Caribbean, Asia and Africa.

Considerable advances have been made this year in regional integration. Progress has been made in the joint assessment carried out with the European Union to launch negotiations in 2006 for an association and free trade agreement between both regions.

The Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) with the United States, which includes the Central American countries and the Dominican Republic, offers great opportunities to our country for the generation of employment, increased investment and legal certainty. However, as we enter CAFTA-DR, the credit rating and export promotion agencies of the developed countries have assigned us a risk rating less favourable than what we consider it should be. Along with other consequences, that situation unfairly increases the cost of credit for us. Guatemala has one of the best debt-servicing records in Latin America, one of the world's best external debt indicators, well-established working relations with all multilateral agencies, sustained economic growth for more than 15 years, a stable currency, a single-digit rate of inflation and a high level of monetary reserves.

Strategically, Guatemala has advanced in the negotiation of trade agreements with Colombia, the Republic of China in Taiwan, the Russian Federation, Belize, MERCOSUR, CARICOM, the Andean Group, Chile, Canada, Egypt and Israel.

Another fundamental pillar of Guatemala's foreign policy is caring for the needs of Guatemalan migrants. The Government endeavours to solve their problems and to ensure that their human rights are respected, taking actions for that purpose at the national and international levels. We appeal to recipient nations, particularly the United States, to facilitate the regulation of the status of Guatemalan migrants in their countries. For those reasons, we continue to cooperate at the international level with all efforts aimed at resolving the problems that migrants face. We welcome the recognition contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) on the link between international migration and development.

Guatemala will continue to take the necessary steps to put an end to poverty in the country and to attain sustainable development. Prioritization of public expenditure at the national level is not sufficient for the magnitude of the actions we are setting out to accomplish. We consider it imperative to ensure the success of the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). By definition, the Doha Round should place development at the heart of its negotiations, and we trust that, when we meet in Hong Kong in December, we shall take decisions that by and large are consistent with the aspirations of developing countries. We need to have a level playing field in trade and agricultural commodities, and we need wider access to the markets of the most dynamic economies in the world for our goods and services, as well as to expand and diversify our product base.

We welcome the offer made by President Bush in this Hall to speed up the elimination of all tariffs and subsidies that distort free trade in the world. We urge donor countries, development agencies and the international financial system to increase their financial and technical cooperation with medium and low-income countries, with a moderate debt level, one of which is my country, Guatemala.

I wish to stress in particular our concern for the situation of the 23 million inhabitants of the Republic of China in Taiwan, whose aspirations for representation in international organizations remain

unfulfilled. Guatemala, which is committed to the maintenance of international peace and security as well as to the peaceful settlement of disputes, appeals to the countries bordering the Taiwan Strait to refrain from any threat or use of force and urges them to resolve their differences through dialogue.

We also express our hope that the difficult situation in the Middle East will have a satisfactory outcome, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1402 (2002). We are heartened in that regard by the efforts and progress made in the Middle East peace process, and particularly by the dialogue begun between the parties, the implementation of the road map, and the implementation of the disengagement plan.

One cannot avoid recalling here, during this anniversary of our Organization, the millions of persons who perished during the Second World War and the Holocaust as a result of the power of totalitarianism. Our presence here also recalls us to the struggle to recover democracy, freedom and the dignity of the human being.

Hope was born from the liberation of men, women, boys and girls from the concentration camps, the end of the war and the adoption of the Charter in San Francisco. We cannot disappoint those hopes or return to the past. The United Nations must deliver on its promises and continue to offer humanity an opportunity.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Zarifou Ayeva, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Togo.

Mr. Ayeva (Togo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the people and Government of Togo and on my own behalf, to extend our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I also assure you of the support and cooperation of the Togolese delegation, confident as I am that your experience and outstanding qualities will prove to be a major asset in ensuring that our work at this session will be commensurate with the great stakes and global challenges that we must meet together.

I also convey to your predecessor, Mr. Jean Ping, our deep appreciation for the immense work he undertook with marvellous enthusiasm throughout his mandate. With commitment and insight, the qualities of a seasoned diplomat in service to his country, Gabon, and to Africa, he effectively guided the work of the preceding session, including the debates held in recent days on the Millennium Development Goals.

I also take this opportunity to pay vibrant tribute to the Secretary-General, our brother Kofi Annan, whose commitment to the United Nations and to the great causes and noble ideals it embodies has allowed us to register critical progress in improving the quality and effectiveness of the United Nations operations. I pledge him my country's full support in the ongoing mission we have entrusted to him, which he has carried out with competence, serenity, resolve and humanism.

The United Nations is now at a crossroads. The challenges that continue to face the world — in particular the ongoing conflicts that are ravaging many countries and regions around the world, the pandemics, floods and natural disasters, the terrible dangers that threaten the environment and the ecosystem, famine in various places, particularly in Africa, caused by drought and climate change, and the growing gulf between the wealthy countries and those afflicted by underdevelopment — require greater solidarity, the urgent reform of our Organization, and the adaptation of its bodies and operations to the new international context.

My country, Togo, will therefore firmly support the United Nations reform process, as outlined in the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, entitled "A more secure world: our shared responsibility" (A/59/565). Indeed, we absolutely must reaffirm certain fundamental principles and ideals that guided the founding fathers of the United Nations. We must devise strategies and working methods that are bolder and better adapted to the scope and seriousness of problems that cannot be effectively resolved except in the framework of this Organization, a symbol of solidarity and brotherhood among States and peoples. We need to pursue and step up our fight against poverty and hunger, the lack of education, gender inequality, child mortality, disease, environmental degradation, and devastating and lethal conflicts.

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government and people of Togo, to convey our deep gratitude and thanks to the community of States represented here for its many expressions of support and sympathy for our country after the unexpected

demise of President Gnassingbe Eyadema and in the context of Togo's difficulties in the wake of his death.

Very fortunately, Togo has emerged from that period of unrest and instability. Calm and serenity now reign and promise a new era of hope for our country. In fact, in spite of the tensions and violence that marked the electoral process, Togo has continued since then to make tangible progress in peacefully reorganizing its social and political life. The representatives of all political persuasions and civil society have together established a Government of national unity. Moreover, in accordance with our desire for openness and dialogue, we have launched consultations with the Togolese political class and civil society in order to reach a broad consensus and mobilization in managing the process of national reconciliation and in efforts to ensure the return and reintegration of refugees. The consultations also mark the onset of a political dialogue that will allow us, through joint effort, to agree on electoral reform, the reorganization of regulatory bodies and institutions, and the stages and schedule of legislative elections.

Safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms, enshrining the values and practices of democracy, and strengthening the rule of law and good governance are at the heart of the 22 commitments that my country approved on 14 April 2004 with the European Union. They are also at the very core of our action and of the demands and expectations of my fellow citizens. Immediately following the establishment of the Government, we therefore adopted bold measures and initiatives in various sectors.

A special independent national commission of inquiry was created to investigate the violence and vandalism committed during the electoral process. Similarly, Togolese authorities at all levels have fully cooperated with the United Nations fact-finding mission mandated to look into the violence and allegations of human rights violations committed between 5 February and 5 May 2005. The mission's conclusions and recommendations, which I believe will be useful and promising, will be considered in a spirit of open-mindedness and with a view to correcting potential areas of weakness so that we may never again experience acts of violence in future elections in Togo. In an effort to restore calm and reduce tension, all persons detained for their suspected involvement and responsibility in acts of violence, atrocities, pillaging of property and ransacking of buildings during the elections have been released. Also, with a view to strengthening citizens' confidence in the Republic's institutions, we have just launched a wide-ranging programme to reform the justice system.

Today, we reaffirm that democracy spurs the harmonious and sustainable socio-economic development of Togo. In that respect, effectiveness and transparency in the management of the affairs of the capital and respect for human rights are important responsibilities of the Government of Togo.

However, it is clear that the young democracy of Togo needs the international community's support in order to help democracy to take firm root and to strengthen peace and stability in West Africa. I take this opportunity to express once again the gratitude of the people of Togo to the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States for their assistance to Togo during such a crucial period.

Building a State where the rule of law prevails is a long-term effort; it is achieved gradually and requires consolidation at each step. That is true for all great democracies. I therefore call on all our development partners to support Togo in its steadfast and irreversible march towards a democratic, law-based State in which all Togolese can fully exercise their fundamental rights and can act, think and create in complete freedom.

In conclusion, I would like to underline once again the merits of international solidarity, in particular between the prosperous countries and the developing countries. In fact, we live in an increasingly interdependent world that faces multiple threats and challenges. Those threats spare no State, large or small, and make it imperative that we take coordinated and united action, in particular in those situations that jeopardize international peace and security.

Africa, in particular, remains a zone of conflicts and instability, and this exacerbates the feelings of helplessness and distress among our peoples. We welcome the engagement and the support of the international community, in particular in Côte d'Ivoire, the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region.

We welcome encouraging signs in the peace process in Burundi. However, we call on the United Nations and the international community to remain vigilant and active in helping the brotherly people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose country

is moving towards stability and the completion of its electoral process.

Côte d'Ivoire must quickly return to the path of peace and harmony in order to pursue a leading role in the efforts for political and economic integration in West Africa.

But we believe that it would be wise to take timely action to address the causes of those conflicts, rather than intervene at a later date to deal with the often devastating consequences. We should therefore reflect together on how to address the root causes of those situations.

That leads me to make two suggestions for the Assembly to ponder.

First, regarding institutions, Africa must put in place democratic institutions of a new kind, founded on the value of dialogue and the ongoing search for compromise and consensus, closer to our tradition of discussion than to the imposition of the majority decision.

Second, we need to strengthen the management capabilities of States whose administration is still weak in order to improve the quality and the effectiveness of the public and administrative services, thus putting the State at the service of its citizens.

I hope that our Organization will strengthen its action to make national administrations more effective and more accessible for citizens. By doing so, the United Nations would further realize its vocation as an irreplaceable forum for dialogue and solidarity in the service of humanity, the well-being of peoples and the maintenance of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.